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Brooks Adams and his politics in the nineteenth century

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BROOKS ADAMS AND HIS POLITICS IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

by

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INTRODUCTION

Brooks Adams, the aristocratic Boston reformer of the Gilded Age and scholarly observer of the industrial American scene, belonged to a long established family tradition in scholarship and politics, that determined the character of his social and political criticism of the contemporary American scene. The heritage extended back into the American past to the arrival of the first Henry Adams who entered Boston, Massachusetts, around 1636. This first Adams, given a plot of land at Mount Wolaston, later called Braintree, produced a living from the New England soil. For the next one hundred and twenty years the family lived quietly as Puritan freemen. Minor offices such as selectman from Braintree and surveyor of highways were held by several subsequent members of the family. But the only incident of note occurred when John Adams[1] married Susanna Boylston, daughter of a prominent medical family in colonial history.[2]

In the fifth generation John Adams achieved national recognition for service as a diplomat and politician. From his career stemmed a family tradition for public service that would continue nationally to 1936.[3] John Adams in the eighteenth century set the tone of active political and social leadership, and displayed the qualities of character

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[1]Father of second President of the United States.

[2]James Truslow Adams, The Adams Family (New York: The Literary Guild, 1930), pp. 6-7. Hereafter cited as: Adams, Adams Family.

[3]Charles Francis Adams II, son of John Quincy Adams, Jr., and Secretary of the Navy under President Herbert Hoover, was the last of his family to hold a position of national prominence.

that would be the mainspring of the Adams tradition for the next three generations.

The primary political tenet upon which the Adams tradition revolved was an inherent belief that the political experiment in America must succeed. The secondary tenets of the family tradition were: a belief in a typically eighteenth century approach to public and political issues, an aristocratic belief in an educated leadership, and a Puritan belief in continual self analysis. In a sense the Adams mind for at least four generations developed as a single mind with its frame of reference, the eighteenth century. Each generation, unwilling to alter its stubborn principles, became increasingly aware of the family tradition.

John Adams served as the country's first vice-president and its second president. His son, John Quincy, was the sixth president and both, noted for their tactlessness in politics, failed to be re-elected. Both refused to become involved in emotionalism and were "guilty" of suggesting policies that were often politically unacceptable.[4]

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[4]When John Adams assumed office, James Monroe, who sympathized with the French Radicals, was replaced by Charles C. Pinckney as Minister of France. This action, together with the Jay Treaty angered the Directory at Paris; Pinckney was ordered home; French vessels were authorized to seize American vessels; and the French Minister to the United States was recalled. Most Federalists demanded war but Adams never succumbed to the war fever. He sent a delegation to Paris which drew up the Convention of 1800, thus ending the United States' only entangling policy and affirming the principle that free ships make free goods. To the dismay of the extremists he had prevented the United States from being dragged into war. But he also ruined his political career.

Page Smith, 1784-1826, Vol. II: John Adams (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1962), pp. 923-925, 927-932, passim.

John Quincy Adams, in his first message to Congress in 1825, advocated the continuation of the Bank of the United States, a strong national government able to use its power in promoting the national

All four generations demanded that there be a place for a political statesman who lived a public life dedicated to principle. The principle, of course, would be defined by the Adams tradition. To Charles Francis Adams, a statesman's first and greatest qualification constituted:

> . . . the mastery of the whole theory of morals which makes the foundation of all human society. The great and everlasting question of the right and wrong of every act whether of individual men or collective bodies. The next is the application of the knowledge thus gained to the events of his time in a . . . sympathetic way.[5]

The study of law was another tradition which Brooks Adams acquired from his family heritage. The members of each generation were trained in the conventional method of the time by attending Harvard and reading law under a lawyer of prominence. John Adams read law under James Putnam, John Quincy under Theophilus Parsons, Charles Francis under Daniel Webster, while Henry, who studied at Harvard but never acquired a law degree, twice began his training under Horace Gray.[6] Brooks Adams, with characteristic independence, attended Harvard and took the law examination without reading law with anyone. He was admitted to the bar in April, 1873, and began a practice with Edward Jackson Lowell.

Members of all four generations revealed an intense individualism.

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welfare, the establishment of a national university and the advancement of scientific knowledge with the construction of astronomical observatories. The West detested his support of the Bank of the United States and the South opposed his advocacy of a strong national government. As a result his administration suffered from chaos and antagonism.

Samuel Flagg Bemis, John Quincy Adams and the Union (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1956), pp. 69-78.

[5]Adams, Adams Family, pp. 276-277.

[6]J. C. Levenson, The Mind and Art of Henry Adams (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1957), p. 6.

A determined, even rigid intellectual individualism and independence marked all of the Adamses and they applied their intellectual powers unequivocally and at times dramatically to social and political questions. They were convinced that the independence of the nation and the individual were inseparable. Occasionally in the careers of the Adamses a glaring example of independence of mind occurred. John Adams defended in the courts the highly unpopular British soldiers after the Boston Massacre. John Quincy Adams in the controversy over the Monroe Doctrine[7] opposed Monroe's cabinet and such eminent statesmen as Jefferson and Madison in maintaining that the United States would not be completely independent if it were not allowed to enjoy the same rights as other nations in the world community. With the same fiercely independent spirit, John Quincy Adams, Jr., said, when invited to speak before members of the ex-confederacy in Columbia, South Carolina, on October 12, 1868, that he and his family had been anti-slavery politicians and supporters of Lincoln.[8] In an open letter to the editor of the Boston Sunday Herald, Brooks Adams rebuked Governor Rice's refusal to extradite routinely one Mr. Kimpton at the request of the Governor of South Carolina. Although Rice's decision was popular, Adams pointed out that Rice had violated the rendition clause of the Constitution.[9]

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[7]President Monroe and his cabinet (excluding Adams) were ready to abandon the nonentanglement principle and act with England in preventing European intervention in the Spanish colonies. Monroe ultimately agreed with Adams' nonentanglement policy.

[8]Robert Mirak, "John Quincy Adams, Jr., and the Reconstruction Crisis," New England Quarterly, XXXV (June, 1962), 187. As quoted from: "Speech of John Quincy Adams," Massachusetts and South Carolina (Boston, n.d.), p. 8.

[9]Brooks Adams, "The Kimpton Case," Boston Sunday Herald, September 1, 1878, p. 6.

The family not only had independence of mind but they were also superior intellects. But, as his inconsistent actions in later life indicated, Brooks probably had the most erratic mind of the family. His early years were a trying experience for his older brothers and particularly for his stoical father. The older brothers, John Quincy, Jr. and Charles Francis, Jr., fifteen and thirteen years his senior, were constantly mocking the energetic Brooks. When not mocking him they claimed sadly to find him extremely wearing. Mrs. Adams, fearing that such treatment would have a lasting and detrimental effect on the boy, wrote to Henry asking that such practices cease. Henry, ten years older, wrote to his older brother, Charles Francis, Jr.:

> . . . we ought to try . . . to tolerate the child, who is really a first rate little fellow, apart from his questions, and we ought not to snub him so much. It will break his spirit, or at all events, can have no good effect.[10]

Brooks was to be the problem child of the family for years to come. All through his younger years the boy was of primary concern to his father, for he seemed to be slow in school--a serious sin in the family. Charles Francis Adams wrote to Henry who was studying in Europe:

> Brooks ought by this time to be preparing for college. But he is the least fit of all my children to be left to take care of himself. So that I am going on at present haphazard a little, hoping for something eligible to turn up. Perhaps after this short session [Mr. Adams was serving in the House of Representatives] is over, I may be able to devise something for him which may meet his difficulties.[11]

Mr. Adams had little time to "devise something" for on March 18, 1861, he became ambassador to the Court of Saint James. Of his three

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[10]Worthington Chauncey Ford (ed.), Letters of Henry Adams (1858-1891)(Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1930), p. 10.

[11]Letter, Charles Francis Adams to Henry Adams, July 20, 1860.

sons who had already graduated from Harvard, John Quincy, Jr., had been admitted to practice at the bar, Charles Francis, Jr., had been three years at the bar and was established in a career, and Henry had gone to study in Germany. Brooks accompanied the family to England where he was placed in a boarding school. In the next few years the young boy still had no interest in learned matters, which confused even his disinterested brother, Henry, who wrote: ". . . I don't undertake to express my opinions, and on the same basis require other people to leave them alone, I can neither give the youth information or advice, nor yet refuse to give it."[12] With gradual improvement at the boarding school the elder Adams conceded that Brooks had grown up by the time he had departed for America to prepare for entrance into Harvard.

The father still had doubts, however, as he continued to prod and cajole the boy to such an extent that at times he almost became a tutor through the mails. Before Brooks had time to settle, his father, with characteristic family devotion to country and state, reminded him that he was attending a fine institution.

> It has been . . . a practice of late years among some of the young men to depreciate the value of the education they got [at Harvard]. But when I reflect upon the position of Massachusetts in the United States, and how much her influence had depended upon her Institutions of education than upon any other force she can bring us, I am in no doubt as to the ability of the . . . students that are developed under the protection of the old University.[13]

The worried father had some hope that his son's educational pursuits would not be in vain:

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[12]Letter, Henry Adams to Charles Francis Adams, Jr., December 24, 1863.

[13]Letter, Charles Francis Adams to Brooks Adams, July 14, 1865.

> During the critical [first] year you will be . . . left to yourself to make the proper use of your time. But I am encouraged in the reflection that you have . . . earned from preceding instructors the high commendation of being faithful to your work. . . .[14]

Although Mr. Adams seemed to retract some of his previous optimism concerning Harvard, he implied that Brooks had the potential of acquiring a top-rate education if he only maintained self discipline. With typical Adams' logic, he pointed out that a man's mind, not circumstances, determined the quality of his education:

> The improvement of [education] depends far more on the will, than on the circumstances. . . . This you will find instanced in the biography of many eminent men. . . . You have never shown any indisposition to study--and your tastes and predilections, if not tending toward the cultivation of languages, are yet decidedly towards knowledge of other kinds. I shall therefore count on hearing from you that at any rate you are not wasting your time.[15]

The candid letters of partial confidence soon gave way to petty rebuking. There seemed to be an inherent concern that the boy would not measure up to the impeccable mannerisms[16] and intellectual criteria of the family.

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[14] Ibid.

[15] Letter, Charles Francis Adams to Brooks Adams, August 2, 1865.

[16] All previous members of the family had maintained impeccable diaries and carried on a prolific correspondence, all of which was saved. A diary was kept by each member of the family for four basic reasons:

1. Out of a compulsive self discipline.
2. For their own personal reference (which they found extremely useful in many a controversy).
3. For frank revelation to themselves and their descendents.
4. A device by which, through self discipline, they improved their style of writing.

The diaries and letters can be found in the Adams Papers which have been placed on microfilm and cover the years 1775, when John Adams graduated from Harvard, to 1889, when Abigail Brooks Adams, widow of Charles Francis Adams, died. The diaries of the three famous Adamses of the fourth generation have been omitted because as Mr. Lyman H. Butterfield, editor of the Adams Papers, has stated: ". . . they have either been receiving or can be counted on to receive adequate scholarly attention outside the

> Your letter to your mother dated August has reached us. I should recommend it to you to put in the day as well as the month as this, to people so far off as we are, is often a point of interest. You do not say much of your arrangements. . . . Exactness in small things may be indeed pushed too far. But as an index of character it is valuable to prove the power to deal with great questions, whenever they may arise. I shall watch your progress in this respect with great attention.[17]

Brooks, while preparing for entrance to Harvard, continued to receive advice from his overseas tutor. He must master the language and cultivate the potential of his mind:

> You still have the matter within your grasp. Take hold of your grammars and master them from end to end. The rest will be comparatively easy to you. You rather fancy geometry and can manage algebra. It is grammar that is the trouble. . . . It will be a good exercise for you to examine his [Grōte] theories pro and con with observations of your own. It was a picture of my own, which first taught me not to depend on mere anthority for my judgments.[18]

Among the numerous letters offering advice, there would occasionally appear a missive reminding the young man that he was an Adams and, therefore, must have a strong character. Mr. Adams seemed to be making every effort to mold the young man into the Adams tradition. Brooks must always remember that he was an Adams and that an Adams was always superior.

> My earnest hope is that all who inherit my name will strive as far as possible to cultivate and develop the qualities which have given . . . some members of it, the credit which

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present editorial undertaking."

"Write, Write, Write; Publication of the Adams Papers," New Yorker, XXXVIII (October 14, 1961), 45. Hereafter cites as: New Yorker, October 14, 1961.

Samuel Flagg Bemis, David Donald, and Merrill Jenson, "The Life and Soul of History," New England Quarterly, XXXIV (March, 1961), 101, 103.

[17]Letter, Charles Francis Adams to Brooks Adams, August 21, 1865.

[18]Letter, Charles Francis Adams to Brooks Adams, September 8, 1865.

> it may have earned in the world. The first of these is an unblemished personal integrity, the second fearless honesty and independence--the two together will go far to . . . imply the profession of a force . . . which enables them to say 'No,' and stick to it.[19]

To the meticulous father there was always room for more improvement and fearing that Brooks' sporadic efforts at various institutions had impeded his education, he continued to remind him of gaps in his training. Adhering to nineteenth century values in education the father subtly tried to build the young man's character by implying that success would come only through self discipline.

> Your letters are improving. There is more care visible in amending mistakes from inattention. . . . You are of an age to begin to think of style of which is one of the great objects of your Cambridge course to perfect.[20]

The instructive father promised to vary his correspondence by alternating between amusing and instructive missives. The promise was meaningless, for the letters continued into the early part of 1868 in the same heckling, commanding and advising tone.[21]

Brooks was admitted to Harvard in September, 1866. Despite the basic optimism of Mr. Adams, Harvard was a small institution dominated by Unitarian influences. It had but twenty-one men on the faculty, 401 undergraduates and 112,500 books in the library.[22] Professors failed to give direction to ambitious minds, for the majority were guilty of

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[19]Letter, Charles Francis Adams to Brooks Adams, September 18, 1865.

[20]Letter, Charles Francis Adams to Brooks Adams, September 22, 1865.

[21]Letters, Charles Francis Adams to Brooks Adams, September 22, 1866; December 29, 1866; January 16, 1868; March 7, 1868, passim.

[22]Thornton Anderson, Brooks Adams: Constructive Conservative (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1951), p. 8. Hereafter cited as: Anderson, Brooks Adams.

creating a hum-drum atmosphere with their stereotyped method of class recitation. In such an environment Brooks relegated conscientious study to a secondary role and became a shining socialite and friendly patron of the local wine merchant. More valuable to his education was the companionship of his brother, Henry, who was now an editor for the North American Review. Henry, who had always had a deeper attachment to Brooks than his older brothers, began to be a friend as well as a brother.

In 1870, Brooks graduated from Harvard with a commendable record. He was a member of the Hasty Pudding, a dramatics club, Institute of 1770, an oratorical society, and the Porcellian Club, the most prestigious organization on campus. Membership in the latter club was a feat which none of his brothers had accomplished. Scholastically he received senior honors In Historia.[23] With the graduation of Brooks, Mr. Adams divorced himself from sharing the responsibility of his son's education. Breaking precedent as a member of the Board of Overseers of Harvard, he attended, for the first time, a commencement where one of his own children was graduating.

In his last year of college, Brooks frequently visited his parents at Quincy, where he dined with such notables as Judge George T. Bigelow, Oliver Wendell Holmes and Charles William Eliot, President of Harvard. His conversations with Bigelow and Holmes determined his immediate future. He tersely wrote in the Senior Classbook: "Brooks Adams born in 1848 at Quincy, Mass. Entered college in Sept. 1866. I intend to study law." His legal education, however, was abruptly interrupted. Since he was not really interested in legal studies, because the school

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[23]Harvard Graduation Program, June 28, 1870.

was going through a period of curriculum change, he was easily persuaded to accompany his father to Geneva, Switzerland, as his private secretary during the Alabama Claims Arbitration. Thus, Mr. Adams remained true to the Adams tradition by giving the youngest of the fourth generation the experience of working and traveling abroad. While in Geneva, Brooks received the invaluable experience of associating with members of the American delegation, such as J. C. Bancroft Davis, Caleb Cushing, former Attorney General under President Franklin Pierce, William M. Evarts and Morrison R. Waite. After studying the German language in Berlin, he returned to America, took the law examination in April, 1873, and was admitted to the bar at Suffolk, Massachusetts. Determined to be more than a lawyer in name alone, he took offices elsewhere than in the family building and established a practice with Edward Jackson Lowell. Both being independently wealthy, however, and lacking any enthusiasm for the hum-drum activity of the legal profession, they dissolved the partnership after a year. Such erraticism was to be quite normal in the years to come.

And so Brooks Adams with his "mediocre" education from Harvard, where he had been sheltered from the moral corrosion of the Reconstruction and immersed in the Adams tradition, entered the post-bellum era. His erratic personality and brilliant mind were to perplex friends and enemies until his death. Charles Francis Adams had not failed in the education of his son; but Brooks' erraticism fluctuated between hope and despair, and occasionally the two vacillated with great rapidity in his personality. His personality would lead him down an inconsistent route in the politics of the post-bellum period.

The post-Civil War period that Adams entered was characterized

by a rapidly growing industrial era stimulated in the North by the Civil War. The War had created an opportunity for private investors to reap great profits, while financing the Northern victory. Moreover, the liberal land policy of the government and the extension of railroads opened more and more of the West to settlement, creating a new market for the industrial East.

The leaders of the post-Civil War industrialization were among the most influential men in America, with the judiciary often ruling in their favor. Based on Section One of the Fourteenth Amendment the Supreme Court ruled, in principle, that state legislatures in regulating corporations could no longer fix a rate so low as to deprive corporations of a fair return on their capital.[24] With the laissez faire policy of the federal government and the favorable interpretation of this section of the Fourteenth Amendment, the businesses of these influential leaders continued to grow in an environment of ruthless competition. To these "robber barons" or "industrial statesmen," who knew no ideal of disinterested leadership, the federal and state governments were only additional instruments to be used in increasing their economic power. Unfortunately in most cases the industrialists represented a new class which lacked an ethical foundation for its conduct of business. The general welfare seemed to be lost.

The philosophy of these industrialists was formulated by the English philosopher, Herbert Spencer. Spencer, like Darwin, was an evolutionist. According to the Spencerian philosophy the primary goal of the

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[24] Santa Clara County v. Southern Pacific Railroad (1866) and Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul R.R. v. Minnesota (1889) are representative of the Supreme Court's favorable attitude toward big business.

evolutionary process was a differentiation of matter into coherent heterogenous aggregates. On the biological level, including man, this differentiation was occurring by means of the struggle for the survival of the fittest. Although survival of the fittest entailed personal hardship for many, it nevertheless had to be accepted as part of an ultimately beneficient process. Spencer also maintained that society existed for the betterment of its individual members; therefore, regulation and regimentation should be kept to a minimum. The system, moreover, was "natural," so that interference with the process was unwise. The Spencerian philosophy, therefore, embodied the principle of a natural laissez faire, a principle which was often used by the industrialists to combat the reformers.

Tc many of the politicians of the Gilded Age, public office simulated a business venture, and the only way to reap a profit in the political world of struggle was graft. Hence, post-bellum politics were characterized by frequent scandals, such as the Credit Mobiliér, the Whiskey Ring during President Grant's second term, the impeachment of W. W. Belknap, Secretary of War under Grant, and the abortive attempt of Jay Gould and Jim Fisk to corner the gold market in 1869. The graft in this period was aided by many of the captains of industry who had no qualms about their acts of bribery. They found a rationale in their actions by convincing themselves that they were ultimately doing a good deed by creating an industrial empire in America.

The political parties of the post-Civil War period, in a large measure, responded to the general tone of confusion. According to the views of a later reform president, Woodrow Wilson, the period was one of: "No leaders, no principles; no principles, no [effective]

parties."[25] Between 1866 and 1872, the Union Pacific Railroad spent $400,000 on bribes, and between 1875 and 1885 graft cost the Central Pacific Railroad as much as $500,000 annually.[26]

As was usually the case when persistent corruption thrived in any government, and when there was a sudden change in social conditions, reform groups appeared. The reform groups of the post-bellum period included the Labor Reformers (1872), the Liberal Republican movement of 1872, and the Greenbackers (1876). It is into this society of degradation, corruption, and early move toward reform that Brooks Adams entered when he left Harvard.

It was a society of confusion, for rarely in American history have such radical changes altered the traditional, physical and intellectual aspects of the country in such a brief time. Rarely have Americans been confronted with such new problems as industrialism, urbanization, technological change and new ideas. Americans unprepared for such a transition floundered in confusion and corruption.

The Adamses were especially confused and frightened. Brooks Adams, continuing the Adams tradition, became a critic of the society. To Brooks, disappointed with a country that traveled the road of chaotic materialism, the sacrosanct democratic experiment was seemingly being destroyed. Henry and Charles Francis Adams, Jr., had already begun their move to remedy the deplorable situation, and Brooks was soon to join them. His tradition impelled him to action. His personality would not allow him to fall back in amused and frustrated

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[25]Richard Hofstadter, The American Political Tradition and the Men Who Made It (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1959), p. 167.

[26]Ibid., p. 168.

resignation like his brother Henry, who, after two political defeats, withdrew from active politics. Henry could not retain hope in or forgive an electorate that preferred President Grant and corruption to the reformers with whom he had cast his lot. He saw in this both a confirmation of his deepest fears concerning the judgment of the people and a justification for his own abstention from politics. But to Brooks a defeat only meant more positive action to overcome the lamentable situation. An entry in the diary of John Adams, in reference to himself, represented the Adams spirit that Brooks carried forward into the post-bellum period of American history:

> By my Physical Constitution, I am but an ordinary man. The Times alone have destined me to Fame--and even these have not been able to give me, much. Yet some great Events, some cutting Expression, some mean Hypocracies, have at Times, thrown the Assemblage of Sloth, Sleep, and littleness into a Rage a little like a Lion.[27]

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[27] New Yorker, October 14, 1961.

CHAPTER I

HIS POLITICS IN THE 1870's

As early as 1868, Brooks Adams had hoped to observe and participate in Washington politics. He thought the opportunity might occur when Washington political circles often mentioned his father as a possibility for Secretary of State if Grant were elected. Ironically, he was unaware that he would soon find Grant and his administration offensive. Grant was elected, but his father was not appointed Secretary of State. Participation in practical politics would come slowly after a period of passive observation. He followed the rumblings of Washington politics and watched when President Andrew Johnson, on February 24, 1868, faced impeachment for high crimes and misdemeanors in office. Brooks hoped that the political confusion in Washington would not create another Civil War, but if this were the case, he pleaded, referring to the country: "God help us for we shall need it."[1]

In 1871, Brooks Adams became a member of the Commonwealth Club. The Club was formed by Henry Cabot Lodge, who intended to establish an organization, non-partisan in character, for the purification of politics, and led by men who could exercise great influence on public opinion. Lodge selected as members: Brooks Adams, with whom he had shared a membership in the Porcellian Club at Harvard; Charles Cabot Jackson, a young businessman of high principles; William E. Perkins, member of

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[1]Letter, Brooks Adams to Charles Francis Adams, February 24, 1868. The letter was written the same day that the House impeached Johnson.

the Common Council of Boston; and Moorfield Storey, prominent young lawyer and former secretary to Charles Sumner. This group constituted themselves as a committee to establish the organization.[2]

The Commonwealth Club informally discussed reform and politics, while a second group called the Porcupine Club, also formed by Lodge, argued law, politics, literature, and just about any other conceivable subject. Not lacking in youthful conceit and Back Bay pride, they chose as a motto: "Populus me sibilat, at mihi plaudo." The Latin phrase was from Horace and translated read: "The people hiss me, but I applaud myself."[3] Among the members were Brooks Adams, whom Lodge had known in college, Sturgis Bigelow, and Lucius Sargent, who had been a classmate since childhood. The Porcupine Club created friendships that would exist for the remainder of the members' lives.[4] It was primarily a social organization and the Commonwealth Club was to be the same until impelled to action in 1876. The two organizations were valuable in creating an awareness among the young New Englanders of the need for political reform in the 1870's, in light of the degradation of the Republican party. The seed of reform was to be planted in these representatives of the Brahmin element.

All the members were idealistically convinced that they would

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[2]M. A. De Wolfe Howe, Portrait of an Independent: Moorfield Storey (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1932), p. 142. Hereafter cited as: Howe, Portrait of an Independent.

[3]Henry Cabot Lodge, Early Memories (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920), p. 274.

[4]Members of the club were among the very few that did not condemn Lodge when he refused to join the Mugwump movement in 1884. Brooks Adams in the 1890's was instrumental in converting Lodge to international bimetallism.

eventually exercise as powerful an influence as that of the Essex Junto,[5] just a century before. The young crusaders did a great deal of deep analytical thinking and listened to Brooks Adams' sharp criticisms about the American scene, as he pointed out to the young enthusiasts the follies of the time.[6] Adams had been reared to believe in the importance of the Republican party. The party, in his opinion, had saved the country at the moment of its greatest danger, but it now seemed to be traveling in a direction whereby it was becoming an enemy to the old form of democracy, which had existed for a century. If the party continued in such a direction, it would be incompatible to Brooks. Democracy meant equality of opportunity and equality before the law, and the essence of the Republicanism he was was inequality. The action of the Republican party during the impeachment of President Andrew Johnson and their high-handed activities in the South only strengthened his contention.

All this activity occurred before Brooks sailed for Geneva as secretary to his father in the Alabama Claims Arbitration. Up to this time, the majority of Brooks Adams' political activity had been nothing more than general and exciting ideas shared and expounded by young, inquiring men.

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[5]The Essex Junto was made up of men of education and property, representatives of Essex County, Massachusetts, who came together in April, 1778, to consider a new constitution for Massachusetts. They constituted the dominant group in the Federalist party, speaking of themselves as the wise, good and rich, qualified by birth, education and property to rule.

[6]Karl Schriftgiesser, The Gentleman from Massachusetts: Henry Cabot Lodge (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1944), pp. 47-48. Hereafter cited as: Schriftgiesser, The Gentleman from Massachusetts.

His first active participation in adult politics came within the family circle through the support of his father for the presidency in 1872, although Horace Greeley won the nomination. Through his father, Brooks had been in contact with several political reformers of the 1870's such as Samuel Bowles, crusading editor of the Springfield (Massachusetts) Republican, E. L. Godkin and other Liberal Republicans.[7] Aside from emotional reasons, Brooks supported his father because, as an Adams, his father would treat all problems with no urge of self-aggrandizement, he would follow a policy of amnesty and reconciliation when dealing with the South, and finally his father, more than any other candidate, would be receptive to legislation that would end the primary evil of the day--political office-seeking by the unqualified. Brooks found sympathetic agreement from some political reformers. As time passed, Brooks Adams began to be more active in the reform movement. Early in 1873, he informed Carl Schurz that he was going to replace his older brother, Charles Francis Adams, Jr., who had been ill. However, not until 1876 did the group that listened to Brooks Adams describe the ills of their society take action on the national level.

Brooks was most comfortable in the ranks of a group of Boston Brahmin reformers who decided to recapture for themselves and New England some of the national political supremacy that was slowly leaving their grasp. His father's political reputation was high; his oldest brother, John Quincy, was rapidly becoming a power in the Democratic party in Massachusetts; Charles Francis Adams, Jr., had already written

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[7]Letter, Brooks Adams to Charles Francis Adams, June 10, 1875. Henry Holt, Garrulities of an Octogenarian Editor (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1923), p. 136.

a series of jarring criticisms of the railroads; and Henry was writing articles which attacked the Congress as working hand-in-hand with a corrupt business system. Henry and Brooks would not make a concerted attempt to acquire political position for themselves; however, if either had been offered a position, he would have agreed to serve. They hoped, primarily, to dictate national policy through the press. Henry Adams confided to Henry Cabot Lodge in 1874, that he and several others were negotiating for the purchase of the Boston Daily Advertiser at an approximate cost of $90,000 and asked Lodge to buy one or more shares at $5,000 a share. The negotiations for the deal, however, collapsed.[8]

In 1874, Henry Adams was beginning to organize a center party among the educated class to propagate a balance-of-power situation and force either the Republicans or the Democrats to adopt the principles he called reform.[9] The nucleus of the proposed group consisted of Brooks and Charles Francis Adams, Jr., Moorfield Storey, Charles Cabot Jackson, and several others. The primary concern of the group was the contemptible state of affairs in Washington, where President Grant was stumbling through his second term amid an uproar of partisan politics and corruption. Henry Adams, spokesman for the group of young dissidents, elaborated on his impressions of Washington politics and the President by writing to his friend, C. M. Gaskell in London, England. Henry's younger brother, Brooks, fully agreed with his comments:

> You have no conception of the condition of things here. Our politics have gone to the dogs. The President [Grant] is detested by everyone. All the most important men of both parties

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[8]Schriftgiesser, The Gentleman from Massachusetts, p. 48.

[9]Harold D. Cater, Henry Adams and His Friends (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1947), p. 67.

> unite in denouncing him as a most objectionable person and a very dangerous one. Society talks about him as a great blackguard and a mean intriguer. The Lord knows what we are going to do about it. . . .[10]

According to the young intellectuals the crux of America's problems appeared to be principally political. They were trying, in general, to defeat Grantism and, more specifically, defeat James G. Blaine in his attempt to garner the Republican nomination. Grantism was generally defined as the corruption in the national government; more specifically, as the abuse of the spoils system, control of the defeated South by Federal armies to guarantee Republican majorities in Congress, and the clouding of relevant issues by a process known as "waving the bloody shirt,"[11] or keeping alive the sectional conflicts of the Civil War. When Andrew Johnson had been president, the object of their actions was simple--clean up waste, confusion and stupidity; but when Grant became president the objects of their action became enormously multiplied. To Brooks, the government was a force above any one class or group in society, regulating the competing powers of various heterogenous groups for the common good. This was part of his family tradition coming in a nearly straight descent from John Adams and John Quincy Adams.

Brooks Adams, in July, 1874, wrote an article, "The Platform of the New Party," for the North American Review. Many contemporaries considered the article an excellent summary of the position of the Adams group:

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[10]Letter, Henry Adams to C. M. Gaskell, February 15, 1875.

[11]The expression originated when an impassioned Republican orator in Congress held aloft the blood stained shirt of a Union soldier.

> A frequent recurrence to the fundamental principles of the constitution . . . is absolutely necessary to preserve the advantages of liberty and to maintain a free government. The people ought . . . to have a particular attention to all those principles in the choice of their officers and representatives; and they have a right to require of their law-givers . . . an exact and constant observance of them, in the formation and execution of the laws necessary for the administration of the Commonwealth."[12]

The Constitution must be strictly observed in order to maintain a free government, which could only be achieved by electing honest and efficient representatives that would adhere to the Constitution in such a manner that there would be proper administration in the country. Only representatives following the law of the Constitution could give responsible government and aid the general welfare. Thus, Brooks Adams issued the warning to the country that unless it returned to those principles which lie at the foundation of government, the governmental structure of the country would be in serious danger. The purpose of the article was to make the populace cognizant of the dangers they already faced and the consequences they would encounter if they failed to check the federal government, which since 1860 had gradually been taking control of states' rights. Adams defined this process as "consolidation".

To Brooks Adams, one of the great controversies in American politics was the question of "consolidation", or the relation which the federal government should bear to the state governments. Occasionally, in past history, a popular issue had narrowed itself to the question of "consolidation", as was the case in 1828 over internal improvement, in 1832 over nullification, in 1860 over secession; and so it was in Adams' time

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[12]Brooks Adams, "The Platform of the New Party," North American Review, CXIX (July, 1874), 33-34. Hereafter cited as: Adams, "The Platform of the New Party."

with federal troops still stationed in the South.

Adams explained that the foundation of corruption and the source of "consolidation" in his generation could be found in past American experience. In fact, the source of evil could be specifically located in the period 1833 to 1860, when the question of slavery began to take on importance. More and more the South sought a solution to save its "peculiar institution." Adams contended that:

> The Democratic party, which represented their [the Southern states] interests, had to be kept in power, and yet it represented a minority. Without Northern support, the South could not maintain its ascendency, and it would not sacrifice its principles to obtain this support. Thus nothing remained to them but a policy of corruption.[13]

In explaining just how this corruption occurred, Brooks quoted his great-grandfather, John Adams:

> Corruption in almost all free governments has begun and been introduced in the legislatures. When any portion of executive power has been lodged in popular or aristocratical assemblies, it has seldom, if ever, failed to introduce intrigue. The executive powers lodged in the Senate are the most dangerous to the constitution and to the liberty of all the powers in it.[14]

Brooks certainly agreed after visiting the Congress in September, 1875. To bolster their waning power, the South developed a plan of nominating a weak man from a free state for President, who, if elected, could be coerced into being a pawn in the hands of Congress.

Party organization became mandatory for, with the rotation of office and the introduction of the caucus, authority and principle were swept aside. In theory the caucus was:

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[13] Ibid., p. 41.

[14] Ibid.

> . . . a meeting of the members of a party in the district where the election is to be held, to select some man on whom they can unite; and in order to secure united action, the minority is considered to abide by the choice of the majority.[15]

Adams pointed out that, in reality, the caucus was composed of people who seldom met, who were mostly unknown to one another, and who as a rule, were grossly ignorant of parliamentary procedure. Under these circumstances, it became comparatively easy for a nucleus of trained men to control the meeting and ultimately the election of local, state and federal officials. To Adams, the caucus provided excellent material for the breeding of corruption. Under consolidated party organization created by the caucus, nomination meant the election of their candidates for the majority party. The voters were faced with the dilemma of accepting the "ticket" or not voting at all.

The only factor that checked the politicians' absolute power was the President's prerogative of appointment. By 1868 the people began to see the faults of the caucus and the patronage that Congress acquired after the Civil War. The debauched political practices of the Radical Republicans in the South shocked the people. As a result, they turned to the President because he had access to the only tool that could check the corrupt politicians. The people turned to the one man in whom they placed absolute confidence--General Ulysses S. Grant. Grant, who had an execllent opportunity in readjusting the political abuses, "failed to comprehend the emergency."[16] Adams wrote:

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[15] Ibid.

[16] Brooks Adams, "Utica City Hall Address," Utica Daily Observer, October 16, 1876, p. 1. Hereafter cited as: Adams, "Utica City Hall Address."

> . . . he was no match for them [Congressmen] upon their own ground; he soon fell under their influence, and has since proved himself, among the many feeble men who have filled the office of President, the most passive instrument in furthering their schemes.[17]

Adams pointed out that Grant's election was a turning point in the history of the country, for now the President and the Congressmen worked in unison toward the complete consolidation of federal and state governmental authority. To Adams, a constitutional federal government meant a series of checks and balances imposed upon the will of the majority for the protection of the minority. A completely consolidated government would mean that the will of the majority is absolute. The government, during Grant's administration, therefore, became a government that ignored the minority.

In analyzing the fate of the country, Adams argued that "consolidation" was gradually obtaining a foothold in the government. It was already moving in the direction of "consolidation", for the executive was being reduced to impotence by Congress. Certain members of the Senate, responsible to no one for their actions, were in reality controlling the policy of the country. Other members of the Senate were attempting to capture their own state by systematic corruption. Finally, Congress, in trying to influence the Supreme Court, was insuring that its own will would be law.

This adverse situation caused a degraded society, according to Adams, for these powerful officials attained their power by appealing to the most unprincipled and least intelligent portion of society. Their strength lay in caucuses packed with voters whom they could

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[17]Adams, "The Platform of the New Party," p. 45.

control by unmitigated bribery. No such system should endure, for it was an organized attack on ability, integrity and education. A government infiltrated by a corrupt civil service with tinhorn politicians juggling caucuses was destined to failure.

Adams asserted, in analyzing the corruption of the post-Civil War era, that in several basic ways corruption in the government had become an established fact.

I. The political situation in the 1870's was only a step in the great advance toward a consolidation of power among the respective branches of the government. The only point in question was how long the catastrophe of final consolidation would be delayed, and by what means its approach could be regulated.

II. The organization of government which was developing in the 1870's was leading to the establishment of absolute power in the hands of demagogues.

III. These being the facts, no concerted effort by the people to free themselves from intolerable burdens would be successful unless reform movements struck at the base of the evil--namely, demagogues who acquired power by means of a weak, vacillating executive, the caucus system, and a corrupt civil service system.[18]

He then proceeded to list those policies necessary to correct the deplorable situation. Reform movements would be successful only if:

1. A strong president curbed the Senate, restricted Congress to its proper functions, and, above all, freed the courts from the grasp of the demagogues.

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[18]Ibid., p. 59.

2. Rotation in office was stopped by legislation. Offices must be held only during good behavior and bribed politicians must be ferreted from politics.

3. Free minorities were granted the right to express their beliefs and principles.[19]

Above all, the caucus must be abolished. Adams believed this institution was strangling society by allowing unprincipled men to break down the principled opposition by driving from the field all who would not indulge in their corrupt practices.

Adams concluded with a stern and prophetical warning to the people:

> Unless the press and country will arise to the level of the emergency, and seriously turn to those fundamental principles on which all government depends, the tale is well nigh told. . . . Ignorant or forgetful of them, disaster is certain. America has been wildly drifting for the past ten years . . . a little longer and it will be too late.[20]

Adams believed the people should comprehend the danger, for if they did not they would be confronted with an intolerable choice between anarchy and disintegration or force.

The article displayed Adams' basic attitudes toward government: that all branches of government must have their authority separated, government officials must be competent, and the caucus must be abolished. Although Adams would work more strenuously for the enactment of the first two ideas, as will be evidenced by his participation in future presidential campaigns, he was never to deviate from these basic demands and principles.

Brooks Adams and his friend, Henry Cabot Lodge, traveled to

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[19] Ibid., p. 60.

[20] Ibid.

Washington, D. C., in February, 1875, to view what they would be fighting. Their visit to the House of Representatives only confirmed their low opinion of the legislators and they agreed with Henry Adams' analysis of the Congressmen.

> I delight in the barbaric simplicity of our native legislators. They do really offer new types of study. They are far more amusing that [sic] your effete members. . . . [of the British Parliament].[21]

Both were surprised when one of the "enemies", James G. Blaine, a foe of civil service reform and one of the "wavers of the bloody shirt", invited them to sit at the Speaker's table. Lodge described their trek down the aisle: "As we marched down the aisle to the Speaker's table I felt the blood rushing to my feet and on looking at Brooks saw he was scarlet."[22] The two young reformers had the same fear and attitude toward the "native" Congressmen that Henry had expressed. The Congressmen seemed to be barbarians on a battlefield who, instead of working for the betterment of society, seemed to be battling for their own personal aggrandizement.

> I always feel a certain vague sense of personal fear when in close proximity to one of our . . . congressmen, as I do when I meet a Sioux warrior on the plains. Now your members [of the British Parliament] never inspire this sensation. I feel it nowhere in Europe, and only among the Bedouins in Africa. Hence how much more amusing our politicians are than yours.[23]

The two also conferred with several Congressmen, such as James A. Garfield of Ohio and Senator Carl Schurz of Missouri, who advocated civil

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[21]Letter, Henry Adams to C. M. Gaskell, February 13, 1874.

[22]John A. Garraty, Henry Cabot Lodge: A Biography (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953), p. 41. Hereafter cited as: Garraty, Lodge.

[23]Letter, Henry Adams to C. M. Gaskell, February 13, 1874.

service reform. What they had seen strengthened their concern for America's political future. Both were now confirmed reformers.

In early February, 1874, Henry Adams began the arduous task of forming his center party. As Henry facetiously stated:

> I have been carrying on no end of political intrigues. . . . Here I have been cooking and cooking a plot which is expected to explode and blow us all up, and I am fussing about like a first class little dummy engine, to shove and pull the slow coaches into position. . . . Just now I am engaged . . . in the slight task of organizing a new party to contest the next Presidential election of '76. As yet I have only three allies: a broken down German politician [Carl Schurz]; a newspaper correspondent [Samuel Bowles of the Springfield Republican], and a youth of twenty [Henry Cabot Lodge] who is to do all the work. With these instruments I propose to do no less than decide the election of 1876.[24]

In the early part of 1875, a group of influential journalists, including Samuel Bowles of the Springfield Republican, Mural Halstead of the Cincinnati Commercial, E. L. Godkin of the Nation, and Charles Nordhoff of the New York Herald, joined in the plot. The journalists, including a group of New England intellectuals with Brooks Adams among them, began to work for the Presidential nomination of Charles Francis Adams. Primarily, the elder Adams was to be an assurance that the presidential campaign did not become a madhouse of politicians scrambling for the spoils. Adams was the primary choice, and the primary objective was to nominate a reformer of dignity and ability.

The movement, poorly organized from the beginning, floundered in uncertainty and inexperience. At first, the group confided its purpose to an inner sanctum of trusted friends. Opinion fluctuated between attempting to organize an independent movement and trying to acquire the Republican nomination for Adams. Veteran politicians warned the

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[24]Letter, Henry Adams to C. M. Gaskell, February 15, 1875.

group that any third party movement would alienate any delegates who might otherwise support Adams. To solve the dilemma, they tried the impossible by pushing both proposals simultaneously. Although some support for Adams had materialized, it soon became evident that his lack of personal magnetism and notorious reputation for political independence would drive off any support necessary for the nomination. The professional politicians of either party could hardly support Mr. Adams. It was clear that the elder Adams was not their man for victory. Brooks Adams, in a letter to the overly optimistic Samuel Bowles, succinctly summarized the reason for failure: "We had no lead, for Schurz is no more a leader than the man in the moon. . . ." He added that the reformers had also failed because they ". . . didn't feel enough. They hadn't been hurt enough. They were only in play after all."[25]

With the collapse of the "Adams for President" movement, the Commonwealth Club, strengthened by the support of John F. Long, later Governor of Massachusetts, saw an excellent opportunity to act. The members of the Club found in Benjamin H. Bristow, Secretary of the Treasury, an ideal candidate. Bristow had recently exposed the Whiskey Ring after it had defrauded the Treasury of $4,000,000 in two years. He had not hesitated to secure the conviction of the President's personal friends and had even tried to indict Orville E. Babcock, the President's private secretary.[26] This made him, in the eyes of the

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[25]Letter, Brooks Adams to Samuel Bowles, February 22, 1877. As quoted from: Martin B. Duberman, Charles Francis Adams, 1807-1886 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1961), p. 508.

[26]H. B. Boynton, "The Whiskey Ring," North American Review, CCLIII (October, 1876), 208-327. This article gives an enlightened explanation on what the Whiskey Ring was and how Mr. Bristow smashed it.

Commonwealth Club, a leader of the forces working for honesty, and the carefully selected Brahmin reformers rallied to his support. They met under the leadership of Lodge to formulate their plans for Bristow's support, when a member of the group sternly informed the club of a clause in their constitution that prohibited any partisan activities. This came as a thunderbolt to the strong idealists, but proved harmless, for the Commonwealth Club adjourned and on the spot organized the Bristow Club, which fought throughout the campaign.[27]

Brooks Adams, in late 1875, however, devoted his efforts to municipal reform and the re-election of Boston's mayor, Samuel Crocker Cobb. To Adams, the election was a crisis, for if the crusading Cobb were defeated, Boston, like New York, would fall under the yoke of "machine" government. A group of the worst elements of the political parties in Boston was combining to defeat Cobb. The object of this group was very clear--to plunder the city of Boston. If this were to occur, "machine" government would control the city, taxes would increase, and the police force would become a training ground for thieves.[28] The election was a trial of strength between those who had a stake in the community and those who had none. To preserve political integrity was the highest duty of men. Indifference would be the first sign of decay. Everyone must, therefore, vote and help put down "machine" government.[29] In the election, Adams' involvement reflected his basic concern that the

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[27]Howe, Portrait of an Independent, p. 142.

[28]Brooks Adams, "The Alternative," Boston Daily Advertiser, December 11, 1875, p. 2.

[29]Brooks Adams, "The Contest," Boston Daily Advertiser, December 9, 1875, p. 2.

demagogue in politics must be expelled from government.

With Cobb elected, Adams, in April, 1876, along with other members of the Bristow Club, began to work in the wards of Boston for the national election. The political neophytes had a taste of "machine" politics when they participated in the Massachusetts Republican Convention. The party convention was full of the reform spirit and the members of the Bristow Club were busy buttonholing representatives from the rural districts. The convention yielded an empty victory for the Bristow supporters because, although most of the delegates were for Bristow, many were still willing to take Blaine as a second choice.[30] The young reformers naively believed that the "machine" feared they would desert the party and run a third candidate unless someone friendly to their demands won the Republican nomination for the Presidency.

Henry Adams' center party, which as early as May, 1875, had grown to forty members,[31] did not, by 1876, have a candidate for the Presidency. Although Bristow would be an ideal candidate for the Independents, he, like most professional politicians, feared a third party or Independent movement. He, therefore, continued to remain uncommitted.

Without a candidate, Carl Schurz and Adams issued a call for a Free Conference of reformers to convene in New York before the regular party conventions for the purpose of deciding whether to support the regular Republican candidate or to nominate a candidate of their own. In late March, Brooks Adams and Henry Cabot Lodge conferred with Carl Schurz and agreed to take the responsibility of making the preliminary

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[30]Garraty, Lodge, p. 45.

[31]Letter, Henry Adams to C. M. Gaskell, May 24, 1875.

arrangements for the convention. As the acceptance of the invitations began coming in, the two became necessarily optimistic. They were convinced that a massive reform movement was under way.

Both were soon to be disheartened. The convention met on May 12, 1876, at New York, with nearly two hundred men in attendance. It was a gathering of intelligent people--college professors, clergymen, lawyers --all of them patriots and most of them reformers. Among those present were Thomas Wentworth Higginson, prominent Bostonian Brahmin, Charles Francis Adams, Alexander H. Bullock, who had been rejected as a delegate-at-large in the Massachusetts Republican Convention because he had accepted an invitation to the Free Conference, and James Freeman Clarke, Unitarian clergyman and firm believer in the divine right of bolting[32] --all from Boston; Mark Hopkins, William Graham Sumner, Francis A. Walker, former Superintendent of the Federal Census in 1870 and later one of the country's leading economists, David A. Wells, former Special Commissioner of Revenue--all important scholars. The latter two frequently published reform articles in the North American Review while Henry Adams was editor. Also in attendance were the elder Theodore Roosevelt, Peter Cooper, a prominent philanthropist, and William Cullen Bryant, editor of the New York Post--all prominent New Yorkers; plus several German-American friends of Schurz, including Dr. Tiedemann, Dr. Jacobi, and his cousin, Edmund Jussen, of Chicago. Generally, this

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[32]At the Massachusetts Republican Convention of 1873, Clark had said: "Every member of the Republican party has a right, first of all to his conscience. . . . I came here to give an honest vote . . . and when that vote is cast, I return to my town, then I have a right to decide . . . whether I shall vote for the nominee." George S. Merriam, The Life and Times of Samuel Bowles (New York: The Century Co., 1885), II, 265.

outstanding delegation consisted of New England Brahmins, aristocratic businessmen, and the members of the nation's intelligentsia. The society of the post-Civil War era was passing them by and, frightened by the turn of events, they temporarily joined forces; but political success would not be theirs for they were children at the business of politics. It was America's rendition of the Frankfort Parliament of 1848, where the intelligentsia of the German states gathered to compose a constitution. Their lack of practicality had made them politically impotent. Such was the case with the Free Conference in New York. As the convention progressed, it became obvious that the reformers had no specific platform. Names were not openly discussed, but "cloakroom" discussions revealed that the sentiment of the convention was for Bristow. The one decided attempt at positive action came when Sidney Thomas moved a resolution committing the conference to Charles Francis Adams as a candidate.[33] It was not well received and he withdrew it in the interests of harmony. A speech, "Address to the American People," written in generalities by Carl Schurz and adopted by the convention, defined the political situation with which they proposed to deal:

> A national election is approaching under circumstances of peculiar significance. Never before in our history has the public mind been so profoundly agitated by an apprehension of the dangers arising from the prevalence of corrupt practices in our political life, and never has there been greater reason for it. . . . The records of courts, of State legislatures, and of the national Congress speak with terrible plainess, and still they are adding to the scandalous exhibition. . . . with all these splendid results [unity of the country after a civil war, an abundance of sources] on record, it cannot be denied that at no period during the century . . ., the American people

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[33]Claude Moore Feuss, Carl Schurz, Reformer (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1932), p. 222. Hereafter cited as: Feuss, Schurz.

> have been less satisfied with themselves; . . . . Of this the corruption revealed in our political life is the cause.[34]

Then the conferees decided to deal with the political situation by endorsing a manifesto. According to Parke Godwin, a member of the conference, the first three paragraphs were aimed at the proposed nomination by the regular Republicans of Blaine, Conkling, and Morton of Indiana. The remaining paragraphs were understood to cover the possible nomination of Hayes and John F. Hartrandt, a "favorite son" of Pennsylvania, one or the other of whom it was feared might be brought forward at the last moment as a compromise and for the defeat of the friends of reform.[35] The platitudes of the manifesto read:

> We therefore declare, . . . that at the coming presidential election we shall support no candidate who, in public position, countenanced corrupt practices . . ., or opposed necessary measures of reform.
>
> We shall support no candidate who, . . . has failed to use his opportunities in correcting abuses coming within the reach of his observation, ...
>
> We shall support no candidate, in whom the impulses of the party manager have shown themselves predominant over those of the reformer; for he will be inclined to continue that fundamental abuse, the employment of the government service as a machinery for personal or party ends.
>
> We shall support no candidate, who, however, favorably judged by his nearest friends, is not publicly known to possess those qualities of mind and character which the stern task of genuine reform requires; . . . .
>
> Every American citizen . . . should . . . resolve that the country must have a President whose name is already a watchword of reform; . . . who will restore the simplicity, independence, and rectitude of the early administrations, . . . a man at the mere sound of whose name even the most disheartened will take

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[34]Frederic Bancroft, ed., March 4, 1874-June 28, 1880, Vol. III: Speeches, Correspondence and Political Papers of Carl Schurz (New York and London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1913), pp. 240-241. Hereafter cited as: Bancroft, Speeches of Schurz.

[35]Letter of Parke Godwin, New York Tribune, July 22, 1876. As quoted from: John Bigelow, 1814-1876, Vol. I: The Life of Samuel J. Tilden (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1895), p. 297.

> new courage, and all mankind will say: 'The Americans are indeed in earnest to restore the ancient purity of the government.'[36]

Schurz's speech was received amid tumultous congratulations, but nothing politically tangible had been achieved. The distinguished gentlemen were non-professionals playing politics. A permanent emergency committee was created, with Schurz as chairman, and the convention adjourned. Brooks' brother, Henry, aptly described the immediate results of the convention:

> My party . . . got so far as to hold a meeting at New York and issue an address. That was the last of it. The two parties made their offers to us, and we dissolved like a summer cloud. I am left smiling at the ruins.[37]

Considering the long range effects of the Conference, it helped to force respectable candidates upon the Republicans and Democrats.

In the ensuing Republican National Convention, the Bristow Club was elated when informed that Bristow was making a strong showing.[38]

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[36]Bancroft, Speeches of Schurz, pp. 244-246.

[37]Letter, Henry Adams to C. M. Gaskell, September 8, 1876.

[38]The following table gives the vote in detail:

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th
Hayes	61	64	67	68	104	113	384
Blaine	285	296	293	292	286	308	351
Morton	125	120	113	108	95	85	0
Bristow	113	114	121	126	114	111	21
Conkling	99	93	90	84	82	81	0
Hartrandt	58	63	68	71	69	50	0
Jewell	11	(withdrawn)					
Wm. A. Wheeler	3	3	2	2	2	2	0
Elihu B. Washburne	0	1	1	3	3	5	0
Whole No. of votes	755	754	755	754	755	755	756
Necessary to choice	378	378	378	378	378	378	379

Paul Leland Haworth, The Hayes-Tilden Disputed Presidential Election of 1876 (Cleveland: The Burrows Brothers Company, 1906), p. 25. As quoted from: McPherson, Handbook of Politics for 1876, p. 225.

The reformers, however, were thrown into confusion when Rutherford B. Hayes of Ohio, a dark horse candidate, won the nomination on the seventh ballot.

Schurz left his group of reforming friends and supported Hayes, but not until he had tried to convince the "Adams delegation" they should do the same:

> He [Hayes] is a man of more than average ability . . ., unspoiled as a politician. It will be our fault, . . . if we don't gain a decisive influence in his administration. . . . Let me confide that I never contained as high an opinion of Mr. Tilden as a reformer as you did. He has been too much of a demagogue and is too much of a wirepuller and machine politician . . . to be depended upon as a man of principle.[39]

Brooks and Henry, not convinced by the argument, left the Republican party and supported Tilden and the Democrats. Brooks Adams went one step further by offering his services as orator to the Tilden forces. In a speech before the voters of Oneida County in Utica, New York, he explained why he supported the Democrats and Tilden. Adams hammered at his basic ideas, that a strong president must stop the Senatorial ring which controlled the Republican party and the Senatorial patronage, and that the rotation of office must be halted by legislation. Hayes would be a weak executive under the control of the Senatorial ring, which maintained its power by reviving the dying hatred of the Civil War and by stirring up needless bitterness in the North, only for the sake of private gain. To Adams, Tilden was the only hope for the country because:

> If he can do it, he will once more raise the Executive to the place where it belongs; he will restore the balance of our

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[39]Letter, Carl Schurz to Henry Adams, July 9, 1876.

> government. . . . I vote for him because I am for reform and he is the man who crushed the canal ring, as the man who imprisoned Tweed, as the man who stood for honesty . . .; and lastly, I vote for him to make my protest against the evil record . . . of the Republican party.[40]

Brooks Adams suffered a political defeat with the election of Rutherford B. Hayes in 1876. The questionable dealings of the Republican party in the South during and after the close of the election only strengthened his contention that the corrupt Republican party must be struck down.

After lending his support to the ill-fated Tilden, Brooks Adams' political activity turned to the local scene at Quincy. Brooks consulted his father as to whether he should run for the Massachusetts legislature. His father urged him to seek the position, though he entertained doubts that Brooks would be successful. Brooks, however, optimistically accepted the nomination, but he did not prepare himself for defeat. The defeat was crushing, for he lost the election by two votes--the votes of his uncles Chardon and Shepherd Brooks.[41]

The defeat did not dampen his interest in politics, however, for in 1878 he finally achieved a political office when elected to the School Committee in his ward at Quincy, Massachusetts. Though the position seemed irrelevant to many state and local politicians, it was very important to Brooks because more than a decade had passed without an Adams holding a local, state or federal elective position. The position was also important evidence supporting the contention that Brooks Adams could be interested and efficient while holding an elective office. His

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[40]Brooks Adams, "Utica City Hall Address," p. 1.

[41]C. F. Adams: Diary, November 7, 1877. As quoted from: Arthur F. Beringause, Brooks Adams: A Biography (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1955), p. 63. Hereafter cited as: Beringause, Brooks Adams.

schools were a model of perfection. He brought visitors to the schools he supervised and he sought advice from professional teachers. Dedicated to his position and the idea of reform in general, Adams wrote a perceptive article for the Atlantic Monthly, "The New Departure in the Public Schools." His primary purpose in writing the article was to arouse a public awareness of the inadequacies of the public school system, namely the senseless practice of memorizing textbooks. The basic theme was far advanced for its time, for Adams declared that the school system should encourage the individual development of each child.[42]

Brooks Adams, once his term had expired, did not serve on the Quincy school board again, but his interest in politics did not end. His experience in politics in the past decade became a rude awakening to the maladies that faced the country. Machine politics was gradually creating a government of selfish men, not law. Brooks Adams, with his inquiring mind and prolific pen, would display an increasing interest in the danger of consolidation of the branches of the government and in repressive minorities such as the Senatorial ring. Politics, practical and theoretical, were indeed going to play a dominant role in Brooks Adams' life.

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[42]Brooks Adams, "The New Departure in the Public Schools," Atlantic Monthly, XLV (March, 1880), 408-412.

CHAPTER II

HIS POLITICS IN THE 1880's

> I do not believe there is excuse for gloom.
> . . . believing that our people are essentially the same as the people of a hundred years ago--equally honest, equally intelligent, equally self-sacrificing--I see no cause for despondency in the future, I see reason for brightest hope.[1]

In the next two decades Brooks Adams adhered to these words by writing constructive criticism about the changing American government of the post-bellum period. Adams, convinced that a balance of power was necessary for successful democratic government, would strive to redress the balance of power among the three branches of the government. The unrestrained materialism of the Gilded Age was gradually disarranging the rights of the three branches of government; the very substance of democracy could be lost enroute.

In February, 1878, the Bland-Allison Act became law. The bill provided for the limited coinage of silver at the ratio of 16 to 1 and the reissuance of redeemed greenbacks. Adams was horrified. The bill was not only inflationary and catered to the special interests of Western silver producers, but it also displayed that Congress had all the power incidental to sovereignty. Adams maintained that the Founding Fathers had created a constitution with written powers which would curb the legislature. The judiciary, therefore, had a role of great responsibility, for "without an independent judiciary, constitutional limit-

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[1]Brooks Adams, "The Cost of Popular Liberty," New York Tribune, July 5, 1876, p. 6.

ations are a mockery. . . . This barrier gone, Congress is absolute."[2] To Adams, therefore, the continuance of popular government depended upon the role of the Supreme Court in stopping such legislation as the Bland-Allison Act.[3]

Adams expanded his study of the Supreme Court by applying his historical investigation to the commencement of the powers of the Court. He wrote to Henry Cabot Lodge:

> I am interested just now in working out a theory of the origin of the constitutional functions of our courts and of written constitutions. I can have no doubt that written constitutions come directly from the colonial charters. . . . There is the undeveloped constitutional system of America as old as the first charters. . . . I am more and more convinced that the growth of our judicial interpretation of instruments of government is one of the most perfect examples of symmetrical development of the common law that has ever taken place. To me it is most interesting and it is utterly subversive of the law school twaddle.[4]

While engaged in his study of the law and the Supreme Court he attended the lectures of Oliver Wendell Holmes. Holmes' major thesis, that law must be analyzed in terms of history and its growth must be traced in light of a series of major ideas along evolutionary principles, provided Adams with a philosophical basepoint in his study of the institutional foundations of law.

In his review of George A. Trevelyan's biography, The Early History of Charles James Fox, Adams traced the transfer in power of classes from the Feudal period to his own time. His main thesis was that power

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[2]Brooks Adams, "The Supreme Court and the Currency Question," International Review, VI (June, 1879), 643, 648.

[3]Ibid., p. 648.

[4]Anderson, Brooks Adams, pp. 32-33.

in the different societies had shifted from the weak to the strong, who, in Adams' terms, were the people:

> The first object of government being to keep order, it is obvious that the making . . . of laws must be in the hands of the strongest power in the nations, or there will be anarchy. What the strongest power is at any particular time is a matter of fact that can only be settled by an appeal to force: in feudal times it was the nobility, in periods of centralization it is the crown, in an age of intelligence it is generally the people. . . .[5]

Adams believed that the rule by the people was advantageous, for the increase of wealth in Europe and America had been greater during the last eighty years than during the seven preceding centuries. The primary reason for this prosperity was the earnest desire which every man felt to better his condition.[6] Continuing his argument for the rule of the government by the people, with certain stipulations,[7] Adams wrote:

> No obstacles now stand in his way, all paths are open to him. The money he earns is his own, and the only limit to his success is his own capacity; and it is precisely in those nations in which these [rule of government by the people] social conditions have been longest . . . established that the material prosperity has been greatest and most rapid.[8]

In conclusion, Adams maintained that the rule of the people was necessary in order to have a healthy commonwealth. It had worked in England:

> The mind of Fox was broad . . . enough to comprehend that there are movements among men which may be guided, but which cannot be subdued by force. He saw and felt that power had

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[5]Brooks Adams, "The Last State of English Whiggery," Atlantic Monthly, XLVII (April, 1881), 569. Hereafter cited as: Adams, "Last State of English Whiggery."

[6]Ibid., p. 571.

[7]A government should be operated by superior leaders exercising such characteristics as intelligence and objectivity in public life. Never should a leader exercise emotional attitudes to enact a policy.

[8]Adams, "Last State of English Whiggery," p. 571.

> passed from the few to the many, and that it was therefore fit that the many should rule. His views are those of which alone a modern commonwealth can rest, and his precepts and his teachings, rather than those of any other man, have moulded the principles and policy of that great liberal party which had carried England safely through the social revolutions of the last hundred years which has convulsed every other nation of Europe.[9]

Adams was beginning his attempt to show the Americans that the Constitutional law of the country was a collection of customs by which the country was regulated. The American democratic system could only be salvaged by allowing the government to be operated by the majority, using Adams' definition of the term.

Adams continued to drive home his point to the people that the Constitution was not an untouchable, holy document, but that it was rather a descendent from the old town charters based on no right more sacred than the right of the weak to make a choice of sacrifices. Adams maintained that the governments and laws of countries, to be stable, must always come from long years of steady growth. Revolutionary republics and ready-made constitutions had always perished as suddenly as they had arisen. Nothing had ever reached permancy that had rushed to maturity. Americans had not followed this disastrous route, for their political genius was in their conservative and flexible minds which enabled them to fit the institutions they had known as colonies to their new position as an independent people.[10]

Written constitutions were ancient in American experience and appeared to have developed with the ages into the organic law of the

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[9] Ibid., p. 572.

[10] Brooks Adams, "Embryo of a Commonwealth," Atlantic Monthly, LIV (November, 1884), 610.

American republic. To Adams this was a most interesting example of the growth of political and legal conceptions. Law had developed in an evolutionary manner. The basepoint of all laws was custom, for: "A custom grows up from the needs of the people, this custom is recognized by the courts, then the custom is forgotten and the rigid rule of law remains, which in its turn is modified by legislation."[11]

Using Massachusetts as an example, Adams propounded that the General Court, under the first charter of the Massachusetts Bay Company, should have been a meeting of the freemen; the leaders of the colony, however, turned it into a representative assembly, whose only point of resemblance to the thing they were authorized to maintain was in the name, which descended to the Massachusetts legislature. Adams pointed out that representative government did not evolve from democracy, but rather from the plotting of a repressive minority. By degrees through the colonial and early national period, the judges acted as interpreters of the organic law, and eventually began to hold void, statutes passed by the legislative branch of the government, that in the opinion of the judges conflicted with the meaning of the organic law.

From the time the role of the Court was established, American constitutional history had been, in essence, a struggle of the majority to control the machinery established by the repressive minority. Thus there were two separate phases of American constitutional history: a struggle wherein the Union enforced the organic law upon the minority entrenched in the States, and the attempt of the Supreme Court to bridle Congress. The weak point in the system was that the judiciary had no

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[11] Ibid., p. 611.

inherent power. Unsupported, it could not compel an individual to adhere to its decision; before Congress its impotence was complete.[12]

From its very beginning the judiciary had to rely upon the Executive to execute its decisions;[13] the Court was always in danger anytime the President and Congress united against the Court. Adams maintained that for more than seventy years the relations of the Court with the Congress were, for the most part, tolerably harmonious. This relationship changed in 1865 when the Republicans had no need of judicial help, for they were strong enough to change the Constitution as they chose. They could neglect the quibbles of lawyers; it was the right of the victor.

For instance, the case of Hepburn v. Griswold, argued in 1868, presented the question of whether Congress could make paper legal tender for debts which, when contracted, were payable in coin. The Judges admitted that no grant of such a power could be found in the Constitution and declared the act void. The decision, however, was highly unpopular. The Republicans strongly favored the legal tenders and the administration

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[12]Brooks Adams, "The Consolidation of the Colonies," Atlantic Monthly LV (March, 1885), 303.

[13]A good example of the reliance of the judiciary upon the executive was in the Georgia and Cherokee Indian case. Georgia in 1830 decreed that no white man could enter the Cherokee Indian reservation in Georgia. A Mr. Worcester entered the reservation and was sentenced to four years of hard labor by the Georgia courts. The case was appealed to the Supreme Court which handed down a decision that the sentence was contrary to the Constitution and treaties of the Union. Jackson sympathized with Georgia and did not force the state to adhere to the Supreme Court decision. He established his point in his famous statement: "John Marshall has made his decision; now let him enforce it." Needless to say, Marshall and the Court, without the support of the President, were helpless in attempting to make Georgia adhere to its decision.

decided that the act should be overruled. It was possible for the Republicans, therefore, by making indiscreet appointments, to reverse the vote of the Court.

To Adams, post-bellum America was ruled by a mass of custom and tradition which silently shaped itself to the changing wants of the people--the Constitution's fate was sealed. It had to yield where it obstructed progress.[14]

> This much alone is certain in our country and in our age; that which the majority of the people want, will be the law, and the President and the Congress, who represent the people will see that the work is done. Our destiny will be accomplished, and the men of the tribunal that would bar the way must fall like the Supreme Court.[15]

Adams was toying with an idea he was not too certain of--the rule of the majority. It had influenced the governments of the Western world since the Middle Ages and, in establishing the people's will, a battle must be fought. Adams had been dealing with politics on a theoretical basis for several years. Now he had to take once again an active part in practical politics; the event was the scandalous campaign of 1884.

The white plumed knight, James G. Blaine, carried the standard for the Republican party. Blaine was revolting to any Adams, for he had a career tainted with questionable financial affairs and he had the backing of the political machine. He was an unscrupulous politician who might sway the judgment of the electorate through emotional devices rather than by analytical reasoning. If he were to enter the Presidency, the democratic experiment so sacred to Brooks Adams would fail for certain.

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[14] Ibid., p. 307.

[15] Ibid.

The campaign of 1884 was to be the most exciting in American history to that time. Blaine had been one of the powers in the Republican party and had awaited anxiously since 1876 for the Republican presidential nomination. The defeat of Grant for a third term, the death of Garfield, the weakness of Arthur, and the disappearance of Conkling from the political scene now gave Blaine a chance to realize his ambition.

Since the Civil War, the Republicans had more or less silenced the opposition of the Democrats by pointing scornfully at them and accusing them of allowing the country to fall into the Civil War. In their drive for party gains, the Republicans tended to overlook the disgraceful deeds and foul scandals which occurred during their administrations. A statesman, Senator Hoar of Massachusetts, gave a brief resumé of the corruptness of the period:

> But in this brief period, [one term in the U. S. Senate] I have seen five judges of a high court of the United States driven from office by threats of impeachment for corruption or maladministration. . . . I have seen the chairman of the Committee on Military Affairs in the House demand the expulsion of four of his associates for making sale of their official privilege of selecting the youths to be educated at our great military school [West Point]. When the greatest railroad of the world, binding together the continent . . . was finished, I have seen our national triumph turn to . . . shame by the unanimous reports of three committees of Congress . . . [and] that every step of that mighty enterprise had been taken in Fraud. I have heard in the highest places the shameless doctrine avowed, . . . that the true way by which power should be gained . . . is to bribe the people with the offices created for their service, and the true end for which it should be used when gained is the promotion of selfish ambition. . . . I have heard that suspicion haunts the footsteps of the trusted companions of the President.[16]

Only a candidate with a spotless reputation could overcome this tainted record. Blaine, although he had a magnetic personality and a

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[16]Quoted in: Robert McElroy, Grover Cleveland: The Man and The Statesman (New York and London: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1923), p. 74.

brilliant mind, could not fill the criteria because his past touched on the bad points of his party's history. He had been connected in a dubious manner with the railroad frauds as revealed in the Mulligan letters.[17]

After two previous attempts, one in 1876, the other in 1880, Blaine finally gained the Republican nomination in 1884. To many Republicans, the nomination of Blaine, with his liking for sectional controversy, his belief in the spoils system, and his dubious railroad transactions, was an insult that caused them to bolt the Republican party and throw their support to the Democratic candidate. They would not be disappointed, for the Democratic nominee was Grover Cleveland. A Boston Advertiser reporter aptly described Cleveland as a man who:

> . . . is indeed a good liver, has the air of a man who had made up his mind just how he ought to behave in any position where he may find himself. . . . He has the happy faculty of being able to refuse a request without giving offense. . . . He has impressed me always as one heartily desirous of getting at the bottom of any matter he may have in hand, and of acting wisely in it.[18]

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[17]The charges against Blaine were that when Speaker of the House in 1869 he made a decision that saved a land grant for the Little Rock and Fort Smith Railroad; and after calling the attention of the railroad officials to this favor, he received the privilege of selling the road's bonds on a secret and highly generous comission. The letters were called the Mulligan letters because James Mulligan of Boston had kept some books for Warren Fisher, Jr., of the Little Rock railroad, and held many of Blaine's letters to Mr. Fisher.

Mulligan appeared in Washington with the letters in 1876, where Blaine, by methods which did him no credit, obtained possession of them and in self defense produced and read several of them on the floor of the House. Careful study has shown that he resorted to evasion and falsehood and that his connection with the railroad was unworthy of an honest man. Alan Nevins, Grover Cleveland: A Study of Courage (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1932), p. 145. Hereafter cited as: Nevins, Cleveland.

David Saville Muzzey, James G. Blaine: A Political Idol of Other Days (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1935), pp. 83-99, 301-304, passim. Hereafter cited as: Muzzey, Blaine.

[18]Boston Advertiser, July 12, 1884. As quoted from: Nevine, Cleveland, p. 155.

By the opening day of the Democratic convention, even though he was opposed by John Kelly, who led the powerful forces of Tammany Hall,[19] and by the opportunistic Ben Butler, all the states except those with favorite sons and the Pacific Coast were supporting Cleveland because of his character and because they believed that, more than any other candidate, he could bring them a long sought victory. Cleveland easily won on the second ballot.[20]

The need for civil service reform, the tariff, the need for a larger Navy, a more aggressive foreign policy, and sound currency were all issues in the campaign. The campaign of 1884, however, differed in

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[19]General Edward S. Bragg, of Wisconsin, adequately expressed the feelings of the majority of the delegates toward Tammany Hall by implying that the convention was sick of Tammany Hall; sick of its greed and its jealous spirit. It was always kicking and bolting; it was responsible for nothing but mischief. Bragg concluded his speech by shouting: "Riddleberger of Virginia, whose treachery caused a Democratic defeat in that State, would not be permitted to speak here. Gentlemen, behold the Riddlebergers of New York." Nevins, Cleveland, p. 153.

[20]The following table gives the vote in detail:

	1st	2nd
Cleveland	392	683
Bayard	170	81½
Thurman	88	4
Randall	78	4
McDonald	56	2
Carlisle	27	0
Flower	4	0
Hoadley	3	0
Hendricks	1	45½
Tilden	1	0
Whole No. of votes	820	820
Necessary to choice	547	547

Robert McElroy, Grover Cleveland, The Man and the Statesman: An Authorized Biography (New York and London: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1923), I, 82, 84.

that it took on the nature of a moral crusade. The Mugwumps[21] were enlisting support on the principle that the Presidency should never be in the hands of any man with doubtful integrity. There had been a similar attempt in 1872 but it failed during the abortive Cincinnati Convention when the "machine" politicians put down the supporters of Charles Francis Adams by nominating Horace Greeley. The cause of the Mugwumps was given in Carl Schurz's terse statement:

> I oppose Blaine because I believe that the election to the presidency of the United States of the man who wrote the Mulligan letters and who stands before the country as the representative of the practices which they disclose would be a precedent fraught with incalculable evil. . . . It would be a terrible thing to teach our young people that such a record does not disqualify a man for the highest honors . . . of the Republic. . . . Nothing a Democratic administration may bring with it can possibly be as bad in its general and permanent consequences as the mere fact of Mr. Blaine's election.[22]

Brooks Adams, after viewing the records of Blaine and Cleveland, decided to support Cleveland, for if Blaine were elected it would violate the basic ideas of his articles. With Blaine's election, the will of the majority for general reform in the government would be refuted. The repressive minority must be defeated.

The Massachusetts Mugwumps had organized the Massachusetts Reform Club as early as June, 1884. The most avid supporters of the club were the Boston Mugwumps, consisting of such high standing individuals as

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[21]'Mugwump' was an Algonquin Indian word meaning "big chief." It was taken from Eliot's Indian Bible by the Indianapolis Sentinel at the time of the Liberal Republican movement of 1872, to designate the Independents who thought they were bigger than their party. Charles A Dana revived the term in the New York Sun in March, 1884, and it was used throughout the campaign as a derisive epithet for the 'holier-than-thou Pharisees' who bolted the Blaine ticket. "Mugwumps and Their Forbears," Atlantic Monthly, LXXV (February, 1895), 284; Muzzey, Blaine, p. 293.

[22]Feuss, Schurz, p. 287.

Charles W. Eliot, Moorfield Storey, and Charles Francis Adams, Jr. The Boston Mugwumps, when compared to their New York cohorts, had a greater potential to be effective within the political structure of their city, for they had no Tammany Hall. Their purpose was to mobilize the voters against the unscrupulous candidates for the Presidency, i.e., Butler and Blaine. Brooks acted as an intermediary between the regular Democrats and the Mugwumps. Confident of his role he wrote Schurz:

> I have been, so to speak, the mover of the democratic policy here, and I am on the most cordial relations with the Independents. I know their canvass as well as I know the democratic and I think they have no secrets they don't tell me.[23]

Brooks' influence in the Boston Mugwump movement was not as great as he sometimes affirmed. His brother, Charles Francis Adams, Jr., though lacking the brilliance of Brooks, was more often listened to and won more respect during the campaign.[24]

Brooks, in associating with the Mugwump forces, separated himself from his good friend, Henry Cabot Lodge, who made a politician's choice by staying with the Republican party. Most former members of the Porcupine Club stood by Lodge and his decision. Adams, however, as a former member of the Porcupine Club, was an exception as he and members of the Mugwump movement immediately ostracized Lodge. Theodore Roosevelt, like Lodge, stumped for the Republicans and had little use for the Mugwumps, calling them "political and Literary hermaphrodites,"[25] The criticism

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[23]Letter, Brooks Adams to Carl Schurz, October 2, 1884. As quoted from: Anderson, Brooks Adams, p. 36.

[24]Geoffrey T. Blodgett, "Mind of the Boston Mugwump," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XLVIII (March, 1962), 617. Hereafter cited as: Blodgett, "Mind of the Boston Mugwumps."

[25]Elting E. Morison, The Years of Preparation: 1868-1898, Vol. I: The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1951-1954), p. 122.

of both men were excellent examples of the narrow-minded idealism of the Mugwumps. As Lodge said:

> Since I gave up trying to make a rope of sand, an independent party composed exclusively of good men, I have been in the school of party politics and the lesson I have learned there, partially at least, is to show some liberality towards those who differ from me. I have learned this from the ferocity with which I have been pursued because I took a course different from that of most of the men with whom I once acted.[26]

Both men were resentful toward the treatment they received from the Mugwumps and Adams, for they were classed as being in the ranks of the professional politicians.

Although heavily criticized, Adams did not care, for he was working with the most intelligent sections of Massachusetts society. President Eliot and most of the Harvard faculty had joined the Mugwump movement seeing in it an excellent chance to advance in politics the bold ideas of efficient administration. Moorfield Storey, a prominent Boston lawyer, believed that an educated man had to participate in public life. "He must be active for good or will be counted for evil."[27]

Adams was confident that Cleveland would be victorious and assured the future president that his efforts were not inspired by personal gain:

> We may be mistaken; it is human to be deceived especially when one has had one's mind earnestly set upon one side of a question for months, but none of us can see how we can fail. . . . I can assure you that so far as I know neither I myself nor any member of the various independent committees have anything to ask for. I should think it must be a comfort to know that there are some American citizens who don't expect an office when you come in.[28]

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[26]Garraty, Lodge, p. 84.

[27]Blodgett, "Mind of the Boston Mugwump," p. 618.

[28]Letter, Brooks Adams to Grover Cleveland, October 28, 1884, Library of Congress. As quoted from: Anderson, Brooks Adams, p. 36.

He continued to barter and negotiate with the dissident Republicans by urging Schurz to take the stump in Massachusetts. Schurz refused to follow the suggestion which, much to Adams dismay wreaked disastrous results in the state, for Cleveland carried only Boston in the election. The state went for Blaine when forty-five per cent of the voting population in Massachusetts remained at home on election day.[29]

Adams nevertheless gave his support to Cleveland because only Cleveland could fill the criteria set by Adams for a leader of the country. Cleveland was for civil service reform and he had independence of mind which would not allow him to sell out to the professional politicians. To Adams, Cleveland, more than any man, would fulfill the will of the majority of the people. He was of high moral character, even though the Republicans tried to accuse him of fathering an illegitimate child.[30]

Brooks Adams was convinced more than ever, because of the scandal, that Cleveland was the man who could once again bring honor to the Presidency. In October, 1884, he wrote to Cleveland:

> . . . the dignity and patience with which you have borne the most disgraceful attacks ever made, I believe, upon a candidate in America, have won my admiration. . . . the same feeling prevails among most of the men I meet [in Quincy and Boston], Republicans or Democrats.[31]

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[29]Nevins, Cleveland, pp. 177-178.

[30]Mary Helpin, a tall, pretty young widow, settled in Buffalo in 1871. While there she accepted the amorous attentions of several men including Cleveland. In 1874 she bore a child and charged Cleveland with its paternity. Cleveland being of high character consented to provide for the child because Mrs. Helpin's other lovers were all married. At Cleveland's expense the child was placed in an orphanage after the heavy-drinking mother began to neglect it. Later the child was adopted by one of the best families in western New York and later became a distinguished professional man. When asked by his secretary as to how to handle the problem, Cleveland replied, "Tell the truth." Ibid., pp. 164-166.

[31]Alan Nevins, The Letters of Grover Cleveland: 1850-1908 (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1933), p. 46.

After Cleveland was elected and had served his first year in office, Adams assumed a revolution had occurred within the Democratic party. His attitude changed, in several months, when he characterized the party as "a mob without . . . obedience, and purpose except for greedy office grabbing."[32] Although Adams was critical of his party, he still remained devoted to Cleveland because he, more than any other Democratic leader, represented a vigorous leader with strong and independent judgment. Adams hastily made the accusation against the wrong party because, although the Democrats did not entirely conform to civil service reform, Adams' contentions would have been more valid if it were applied to the Republican majority in the Senate. The Republicans, smouldering over the defeat of 1884, were extremely disgruntled by the exposure of their lax methods in the departments of government. In some way they must restore their waning prestige and minimize the President's growing popularity. Their first chance to fulfill their wishes came in an attack of the President's nominations when the Senate maintained that he was replacing Republicans with Democrats primarily for partisan reasons. Cleveland did not compromise with the Senate and he refused to divulge information concerning the suspensions he had made in his administration. Cleveland was at an advantage in his battle, for the majority of people distrusted the big business character of the Senate. In one of his most dignified documents Cleveland explained his position to the Senate, that: 1. The Constitution gave the President the sole power of suspension or removal, and the President is

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[32]Letter, Brooks Adams to William C. Endicott, Massachusetts Historical Society, Endicott Collection, March 14, 1885. As quoted from: Beringause, Brooks Adams, p. 79.

responsible for the use of this power to the people alone. 2. The sections of the Tenure of Office Act, which stipulated that the President must report his reasons for any suspension, had been repealed. The papers which the Senate had at times demanded as being official papers were not official at all.[33] The trend of the times was to give more power to the chief executive, and soon Republicans as well as Democrats were agreeing with Cleveland's position.

Adams looked on the whole affair with satisfaction and became convinced that more men with an independence of mind should be placed in the government. Adams had wanted sound leadership, and Cleveland was glaring proof that such leadership could work and that this type of man was necessary if the sacred democratic experiment was going to succeed.

After the campaign of 1884, Adams once again lapsed into political theory. He began to consider the possibility of finding a historical pattern in the use of power by minorities. If such a pattern could be discovered the minorities could be checked. The result of his research was the publication of the Emancipation of Massachusetts. The book only increased his interest in repressive minorities and his concern for the future of the American democratic experiment, a concern which gradually led Brooks Adams into the political malestrom of the 1890's.

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[33]Nevins, Cleveland, pp. 261-262.

CHAPTER III

HIS POLITICS 1890-1892

Adams did not participate in the election of 1888, for he was traveling through Europe visiting friends on the continent.[1] Had Adams participated, he would have been dismayed, for Mugwump opposition to Benjamin Harrison was light; Harrison gained a close victory only after his managers had made rash promises to key elements in the Republican party. Harrison lamented:

> When I came to power I found that the party managers had taken it all to themselves. . . . I could not name my own cabinet. They sold out every place to pay the election expenditures.[2]

The break in this period of non-participation came when Adams, who had returned from Europe, took notice of the Valparaiso affair in 1891.

Despite noteworthy examples of good relations between Chile and the United States, the two countries became antagonistic when a revolutionary Chilean ship was detained at San Diego, California, while taking on military cargo. An additional incident widened the breach: the American ambassador to Chile gave political asylum to supporters of the unpopular Chilean President, Balmaceda. Anti-American sentiment was at its zenith, when in Valparaiso on October 15, 1891, a mob of Chileans attacked a group of 116 sailors on shore leave from the U.S.S. Baltimore,

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[1]Letter, Sir Cecil Spring Rice to Stephen [?] , April 27, 1888. Letter, Brooks Adams to Sir Cecil Spring Rice, June 23, 1888. As Quoted from: Stephen Gwynn, The Letters and Friendships of Sir Cecil Spring Rice: A Record (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1929), pp. 90, 96.

[2]Garraty, Lodge, p. 41.

killed two, and seriously wounded two others.[3]

The Chilean government made no attempt to protect the sailors and offered no apology. President Harrison, in his Third Annual Message, expressed the nation's indignation and called for action.[4] On January 25, 1892, in a communication to the Senate and House of Representatives, Harrison asserted that the United States government would support its citizens:

> It must, however , be understood that this Government, while exercising the utmost forbearance toward weaker powers, will extend its strong and adequate protection to its citizens, to its officers, and to its humblest sailors when made the victim of wantoness and cruelty in resentment not to their personal misconduct, but of the official acts of their Government.[5]

Adams, in a moment of jingoistic enthusiasm, was angered by the Chilean government's delay in not offering an apology or reparation for its dastardly deed; he was equally exasperated by the lack of interest of the capitalists in the whole affair. The incident aroused a deep seated and inherited prejudice in Adams toward State Street, the epitome of capitalism. Adams even defended Harrison's bellicose policy during the crisis. Adams had for the first and last time supported Harrison during his administration. With a change in the Chilean government, an apology was given, along with a reparation of $75,000 for the families of the two murdered sailors.[6]

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[3]Samuel Flagg Bemis, A Diplomatic History of the United States (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1950), p. 754. Hereafter cited as: Bemis, Diplomatic History of the U.S.

[4]James D. Richardson, A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1891 (Published by Authority of Congress, 1901), IX, 185.

[5]Ibid., p. 225.

[6]Bemis, Diplomatic History of the U.S., p. 754.

With the Valparaiso affair settled, Brooks Adams moved into the political milieu of the 1890's. To fully understand his political movements and thoughts in the 1890's, one must comprehend the chaotic state of affairs in the country. The decade is remembered for the most disastrous depression in United States history up to that time. There had been erratic financial practices during the whole post-bellum period. In the Harrison administration, there had been extravagant appropriations made by Congress and excessive expenditures by the federal departments.

The decade of the 1890's has often been called the "Gay Nineties". Actually, during this decade over five years of extended depression pulled agriculture to its lowest depths, demoralized transportation and industry, and created various economic problems which were interwoven with politics. Tariffs and free silver dominated the political life of the decade, but hardly raised the morale of the citizens.

The decade was a period of transition and change. The politicians of previous decades, the Mortons, Blaines, and Conklings, were being replaced by new men, like the silver-tongued Bryan. With the entrance of these new men, the political issues changed, for "waving the bloody shirt" no longer held the importance as a political issue that it once had. The attempt to pass the Federal Elections Bill[7] was the last example of a dying issue. Senator Lodge from Massachusetts and one of the bill's main supporters did not revive the measure once it had been

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[7]The Federal Elections Bill provided for the supervision of elections in Congressional districts if 500 voters made such a request. The Bill was aimed at areas in the South where Negroes, despite the 14th and 15th amendments, were still not going to the polls.

defeated because he was almost certain that it would die in committee.

Change could also be seen in the areas of industry and agriculture, with giant capitalists like Carnegie, Morgan, and Rockefeller, predominantly influencing the production and economy of the country. Exploitation of natural resources made the nation rich, but the riches were gravitating into the hands of the few, and the power of wealth in politics caused misgivings. In a sense, democracy flourished--and with it corruption. The triumph of industry brought, however, a turning point in the philosophy of Social Darwinism. For years, the captains of finance had found justification for their policies and activities in Darwin's "survival of the fittest" philosophy, which was given social and moral connotations by William Graham Sumner and Herbert Spencer.

The philosophy was becoming less accepted in the 1890's and there was an increasing concern for injustice, due to the efforts of men like Henry George for reform. George denied that social evils resulted from the working of fixed laws, eternal and inevitable, as Spencer held, but rather that they came from a rationalization of greed. Injustice of society, and not the niggardliness of nature, was the cause of want and misery. But even though the critics of Spencerianism were beginning to make inroads, the capitalists still held a superior power and influence.

The capitalists were successful in overcharging the farmer for the majority of his goods. The farmers, disgusted with deflation, were obligated to pay for commodities with a dollar less valuable than the one lent. Farmers suffering from drought and poverty began to believe that a conspiracy was occurring among the moneyed classes of the world and country.

This was a fear that had been with the Adams family since the

Civil War, when Brooks' brother, Henry, published an article, "The New York Gold Conspiracy." Brooks Adams openly attacked the plutocrats, bankers, and Jews, which he summarized in the term "gold bug". To Brooks, this term was the embodiment of everything foul in his generation. History had persuaded him that the moneyed powers had poisoned the world. He wrote Henry:

> I never should have hated Wall Street as I do, if I had not dug the facts out of history, and convinced myself that it is the final result of the corruptest society which ever trod the earth. I tell you Rome was a blessed garden of paradise beside the rotten, unsexed, swindling, lying Jews, represented by J.P. Morgan and the gang who have been manipulating our country for the last four years.[8]

The statement was representative of the over-simplifications that Adams was often guilty of and contradictions that composed his complex character. He knew well that his family income depended on the well being of the financiers but was thrown into a dilemma when his own narrow prejudice and study of history created a dislike for financiers. The comment also gave an insight into Adams' jingoistic nationalism, a characteristic which occasionally bordered on the irrational. The United States, Adams implied, had been corrupted by the European Jewry. According to Adams, in the more advanced forms of civilization, man was dominated by greed. Roman moneylenders had created debtor laws designed to force serfdom on plebians. By the late nineteenth century, the bankers had won control of England. By excluding silver and manipulating gold, the bankers had become absolute. "Morgan and his gang" were only an extension of the bankers' control of international finance.

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[8]Daniel Aaron, Men of Good Hope: A Story of American Progressives (New York: Oxford University Press, 1951), p. 260. Hereafter cited as: Aaron, Men of Good Hope.

When Adams used the term "Jew", he was not attacking an ethnic group but rather the greedy institution of high finance. Anti-semitism, in a rhetorical sense, and anglophobia went hand in hand. In espousing his theories, his pet aversion was the power of wealth, regardless of what group held it. Without any allusion to anti-semitism, he could still quarrel with State Street.

Adams saw in the McKinley Tariff Bill and the Sherman Silver Purchase Act the evil influence of the repressive minority, the capitalists. Both bills were primary issues in the campaign of 1892. This factor, and Cleveland's sound money stand, pulled Adams into the Cleveland camp again.

The first act of controversial legislation, the Sherman Silver Purchase Act, provided for the purchase, by means of an issue of legal tender Treasury notes of 4,500,000 ounces of pure silver monthly, at the market price, not to exceed $1.00 for 371.25 grains of pure silver. Dollars were to be coined for one year, and thereafter, only as they were required for redemption of notes, which were made redeemable in gold or silver dollars at the government's option.[9] The Act was a good example of an unholy alliance between special interests--the Eastern factory owners and the Western silver mine owners. Certain Western silver mining interests strongly favored silver coinage, for as more and more new mines were opened, the supply of silver increased and its commercial price fell. If the government could be made to coin silver

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[9]A. Barton Hepburn, History of Coinage and Currency in the United States and the Perennial Contest for Sound Money (New York and London: The Macmillan Company, 1903), p. 316. For a complete statement of the Sherman Silver Purchase Act see: pp. 572-574.

again at the old ratio of 16 to 1 with gold, the price would rise.

On the other hand, most people with invested wealth greatly benefited from the deflation of the post-Civil War period, and thus opposed all inflationary measures. The invested wealth group wished to follow a cautious route, for Americans remembered the runaway inflation of the war period and the unfortunate flood of paper money that had wiped out the savings of many. A compromise between the two groups became necessary, the result being the Sherman Silver Purchase Act.

The second act of legislation, the McKinley Tariff Bill, was enacted to cut the surplus in the U. S. Treasury. According to William McKinley, author of the bill, the probable excess of receipts over expenditures was approximately $92,000,000 as of June 30, 1890. Deducting the amount required for the sinking fund, the net surplus would be $43,678,883. A surplus nearly as large was anticipated for the coming year--and the available cash in the Treasury was nearly $90,000,000.[10] These facts made a reduction desirable and, thus, the bill was contemplated.

The bill was supposedly framed in the interest of the people. While decreasing the surplus, its provisions looked to the occupations of the people, their comfort, their welfare, to the successful prosecution of industrial enterprises already started, and to the opening of new lines of production, where conditions and resources allowed.

Such intentions made little impression on the public because it was evident, by looking at the vote on the bill, that it was only the work of political wirepullers. The bill passed the House on May 21,

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[10]Charles S. Olcott, The Life of William McKinley (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1916), I, 162.

1890, by a vote of 164 yeas, all Republicans, and 142 nays, all Democrats but two--one Republican and one Independent. Six Republicans and fifteen Democrats did not vote.[11]

This experiment raised duties so high that they became prohibitive rather than protective. It represented the triumph in Congress of extreme protectionism, placing high duties on such things as tin plate, which the United States did not produce, and on such agricultural products as eggs and protatoes, which were never imported in quantities significant enough to be a threat to domestic producers. The McKinley Tariff Bill was a strong indication that the businessmen had become one of the most powerful groups in American politics.

During this period of logrolling, the Mugwump movement was at its zenith. Young men, fresh from college and sons of the best families of Massachusetts, were tired of the constant waving of the bloody shirt which they had never worn, and began to protest the obsolete leadership which had fallen into the hands of politicians whose only interest, according to John F. Andrews, was "to advance themselves and keep up a strong political machinery."[12] The younger element thought they were snubbed by the older politicians.

A group of young Mugwump Democrats, led by Josiah Quincy and Henry Swift, formed the Young Men's Democratic Club, which soon became an effective instrument in cutting into Republican strongholds in Massachusetts. In 1890, thirty-three year old William E. Russel was elected

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[11]Ibid., p. 177.

[12]Gordon S. Wood, "Massachusetts Mugwumps," New England Quarterly, XXX (December, 1960), 436.

governor and the Democrats secured seven out of twelve Congressional seats.[13] The group, in a sense, was similar to the Commonwealth Club, of which Adams had been a member while a young man.

On the national political scene, the Democrats nominated Grover Cleveland for the Presidency. Cleveland, as compared to Harrison, was a statesman whose views on every political issue were definite and well known; if elected he could have no ulterior political ends in view, for he would not succeed himself. Harrison could hardly stir any admiration from an Adams with his policy of high protective tariffs that functioned as a hidden tax on everyone, and his administration's careless method of dispersing the surplus in the Treasury. Also, Cleveland complemented Adams' jingoistic nationalism by adhering to an anti-expansionist policy. Cleveland endeared himself to Brooks Adams when in 1887, convinced that the tariff system needed modification, he did not hesitate to act, even though it would cost him the Presidency. To Brooks, Cleveland was indeed a man of courage and character.

Adams, therefore, seeing the rise of the Democratic party in his own state, nauseated with the wirepulling of the repressive minorities in passing the Sherman Silver Purchase Act and the McKinley Tariff Bill, and seeing in Cleveland a man who would fulfill his criteria of a leader, stumped for the Democrats in the election of 1892.

On June 15, 1892, Adams addressed the New England Tariff Reform League. His arguments were so convincing that the speech was issued as a tract by the league during the campaign. According to Adams, tariff reform and subduing the capitalists were necessary, for a Republican

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[13] Ibid., p. 447.

success in the election would mean a very serious change in the social system. As evidence of a conspiracy among the capitalists, he cited the McKinley Bill of 1890:

> Apparently four years ago [1888] this point was reached; for it is . . ., clear that the McKinley tariff is nothing but a treaty made by different industries among themselves to stop foreign competition, and that the last presidential election was carried by a combination of capitalists for the purpose of legislating in their own interests. But, side by side by this movement against foreign competition, corresponding combinations have been made for the purpose of controlling domestic production, so that, what between the tariff and the trust, the capitalist class seems nearing the point where it must indubitably attain its object,--the power of unlimited taxation for private purposes.[14]

In his speech, Adams was guilty of one of his frequent weaknesses --over-simplification of the contemporary situation and a love of paradox. In his own mind, the country was approaching a social revolution much akin to the one in England where the bankers had become obsolete. In his enthusiasm to arouse the populace, he was guilty of exaggeration when he said: ". . . government by a minority is a reversal of what we have had hitherto."[15] The Congressional rule of the government during Grant's administration, which had bothered Adams in earlier years, was to his mind, a minority rule of just such evil interests.

Adams contended now that the capitalists would be the epitome of the repressive minority because they achieved power only through the failure of the majority. Legislation of the period, according to Adams, proved his contention. Ultimately, the McKinley Tariff Bill and the conservative interpretation of the Sherman Anti-Trust Act worked to the

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[14]Brooks Adams, "The Issue as One Man Sees It: Strong Address of Brooks Adams," Springfield Daily Republican, August 13, 1892, p. 12.

[15]Ibid.

advantage of monopolies and capitalists. The struggle between the repressive minority and the majority would always be a monetary one.

> That the government by capital must be government by a minority follows from the very process by which capitalists are made, which is by the failure of the many and the success of the few: and legislation in behalf of the few must be as antagonistic to the many as legislation in behalf of monopolies is notoriously antagonistic to legislation on behalf of labor. It is always the old issue,--the struggle over the division of the margin of profit.[16]

After broad generalizations and theoretical declarations, Adams dove into the campaign issues of 1892. If the Republicans were elected, they would only be a spokesman for the capitalists. Although never specifically advocating that his audience vote Democratic, he attacked the Republicans. If the Republicans succeeded they would proceed to buy off the opposition through their tariff program, or attempt to abrogate a fundamental principle of the Constitution, freedom of elections.

Interference with the process of election had been tried before, and culminated in attempts to pass the Federal Elections Bill in 1890. This bill, aimed primarily at the South, where Negroes were systematically denied their rights as citizens, was difficult to assess, according to Adams, for it involved the delicate factors of humanitarianism and political motivation. Republicans, he believed, naturally favored the bill for political reasons, while Democrats generally were against it because it would minimize their numbers in the House of Representatives. Adams, however, after perusing Article I, Section 4, of the bill, which stated that the states could decide the times, places, and manner of holding elections, subject to Congress' right at any time to make or

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[16] Ibid.

altar such regulations, believed that the capitalists who controlled the Congress would use such a device unfairly; therefore, there was more harm than good in the bill.

> ...I believe the success of the republicans will entail consequences that I am very unwilling to face; for I think its first effect will be to impair freedom of elections. . . . In this, . . . I am abundantly sustained by the facts, for the force bill [Federal Elections Bill] was as much a part of the republican program as the tariff; nor was it pretended that the one could be permanently safe without the other. . . . if capitalists are to hold our government as they hold our railroads or our trusts, there are but two courses open to them,--they can buy their opponents or disfranchise them; and the republicans have already given us a taste of what to expect, for they have tried their hands at both methods.[17]

Adams stressed, in particular, the Federal Elections Bill, which seemed to offer the greatest political advantage. According to him, the bill failed because the alliance among the capitalists had been broken; but once the alliance was mended, Adams implied that the capitalists would repress the masses. In reality, his contentions were only a political device to garner votes. The bill was a ghost from the past, for sectional tension created by the Civil War was no longer a major force in politics. Most Senators agreed that the measure would only revive sectional controversies. They were more interested in passing the McKinley Tariff Bill and the Sherman Silver Purchase Act.

> . . . the only reason they [capitalists] failed [in passing the Federal Elections Bill] was because the eastern and western divisions of capitalists quarreled among themselves, the manufacturers refusing to pay the silver miners the price they asked for their votes. . . .
>
> But I am convinced . . . that some device is so necessary that it will be carried through so soon as those who need it find themselves in a position to do it; and, when that time comes, I anticipate that we shall enter on a stage of development very different from anything we have had in our history. It will be the state of active repression.[18]

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[17] Ibid. [18] Ibid.

Adams launched into a diatribe against the Republicans and President Harrison. Two antagonistic forces (capitalists and workers) were heading toward an explosive collision which could seriously effect the country. Returning to practical politics, Adams urged all Democrats to attack the one cohesive element that held the capitalists together--the McKinley Tariff Bill. Harrison symbolized the plutocracy, for though he had been shunned by professional Republicans, he still won the nomination through the powerful efforts of the moneyed interests. Adams overstated his position by maintaining that if the plutocracy won the election, they would stay forever.

> If capital combines for the purpose of taxing the whole community for its own private emolument, the many who pay those taxes will instinctively combine to resist; . . . .
>
> For this reason I think the defeat of Harrison is a matter of serious importance to all men of conservative instincts, who want to keep these two forces from coming into violent collision with each other; and the point of attack is the tariff. The tariff is the key to the republican position, for it is the bond which holds together the great moneyed combinations. . . .
>
> The success of the republicans, with their candidate and on their platform means government by a plutocracy; . . . .
>
> Mr. Harrison, . . . very ably represents the plutocracy. He has been renominated against the protests of almost all the professional politicians of his party, because he does represent the money power; and, therefore, the question is very squarely presented to the American people whether or not they want organized wealth to rule over them,--for, if it comes in now, it will come in to stay.[19]

To Adams, Grover Cleveland was the only man who could successfully oppose the Republicans and Harrison. His platform, stubborn determination, and sound character made him the only choice.

> . . . he is certain to do the work marked out before him by rational and conservative methods. Mr. Cleveland is at once the first of tariff reformers and the strongest champion of sound money, and it is because he is so well known to be

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[19] Ibid.

> independent of both the plutocrats and the socialists that I believe he has such a hold upon the good sense of the people.
>
> No one in the United States supposes that he could ever be the tool of capital; . . . .[20]

This first political speech of Adams in almost a decade revealed some interesting insights into his political character. His study of history had satiated him with ideas that he, for the first time, brought to the public. He had delved into the backgrounds of various civilizations and discovered that they had invariably fallen in revolt and dissatisfaction whenever a minority group controlled the economy. Again, Adams was following a basic political belief of his by striving for a balance of power in the government between the majority and the minority. It was only logical in his mind, considering the position of the capitalists, that the United States was in a similar position to previous civilizations, e.g., Rome and England.

Adams, in simplifying his ideas, explicitly explained when and how the capitalists had gained a position of predominant power. Alluding to his theories of history, Darwinian competition had done its work, resulting in the ultimate control of the government by the capitalists. Congress had become a tool for furthering the cause of the capitalists. Repressive minority rule was not entrenched in the government. It was time for action and the people had to be informed of the impending danger, so Adams took to the stump. In his Greenfield address he elaborated upon the basic ideas set forth in his Springfield address:

> . . . it is that [social] revolution which I think so threatening to democratic institutions or in other words, to our old-fashioned equality. . . . In the course of years competition among [the capitalists] had done its inevitable work, and

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[20] Ibid.

> gradually the abler and stronger had devoured the weaker, until enormous wealth had become concentrated in so . . . few hands that combination among them was possible. That combination was formed four years ago, when Mr. Harrison was nominated; and he was supported by a gigantic pool, who operated exactly as though they were cornering the market to control the stock. They subscribed their money, and openly boasted that they had bought the election.
>
> . . . From the moment the last Republican Congress was chosen it ceased to be an independent body, and became nothing but an index for registering the demands of the power that created it.[21]

To illustrate that the capitalists were more powerful than suspected, he pointed out that although they were shunned by powerful elements within their own party, they were still able to have their candidate nominated.

> . . . the monopolists are not only a minority of the whole people, but a minority even of their own party, and it is only a few months since we were given one of the most interesting illustrations of the truth of this assertion of mine, that it is possible to imagine. [At the Republican convention in Minneapolis the machine politicians did not support Harrison.][22]

As always, Adams believed in democracy and would accept the decision of the majority. He sensed, however, that the majority was not aware of the extent of plutocratic power and of the devices the plutocrats would utilize if attempts were made to eventually subdue them. They must be put out of the government immediately:

> It is perfectly legitimate for the American people to establish such a class government as this, if they want it. If the majority really want it, I am content; but now I am trying to protest against the insidious advance of plutocratic power, before the people are awake to what is happening to them. I want to point out what the . . . almost certain results will be.
>
> . . . it will be necessary for a constantly dwindling minority to maintain themselves in the face of a majority growing larger and fiercer year by year, and the question is how they will do it; . . . they can do it only in two ways--by force and by corruption.[23]

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[21]Brooks Adams, "How Taxes Are Paid," Boston Herald, October 19, 1892, p. 7. Hereafter cited as: Adams, "How Taxes Are Paid."

[22]Ibid. [23]Ibid.

The expulsion of the capitalists was all the more necessary, considering the fact that outside factors such as immigration were lowering the cost of labor. As if this was not enough, the moneyed interests, in trying to guarantee their power, now raised the tariff.

> For I warn you this is the beginning of socialism in earnest. The many will never give up struggling to get their share of the margin of profits, and many are destined to be pinched by the constantly increasing volume of European labor which flows here, while the few are busy screwing up tariffs and trusts, as the McKinley bill was screwed up a notch above the war tariff.[24]

He always opposed Socialism, for it placed the responsibilities of society on its weakest members. He opposed Socialism even more strongly when the majority began to feel that they were suffering under the greatest wrong, sacrificing their lives to a more-favored element. Adams often reminded his audiences during the campaign that unless the repressive minority was controlled, a social revolution similar to the French Revolution could result.

Adams, while warning the voters of a coming crisis, inadvertently predicted World War I. His theories of history, that competition and greed can ultimately destroy a civilization, must have been intuitively at work in his complex mind. Evidence of what ultimately could occur in a social revolution were already seen in the Homestead Strike.

> How long do you think such a state of affairs can continue before a convulsion begins? I tell you that if things go on for the next 25 years [1917] as fast as they have been for the last, we shall be in a social revolution of which no man can see the end.
>
> Already we hear the mutterings of the storm. The Homestead outbreak was a sign of what will surely come hereafter.[25]

According to Adams, the only panacea to the conflict that would result

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[24] Ibid. [25] Ibid.

between capital and labor fighting for the margin of profit would be the election of Cleveland.

> I believe if we elect Mr. Cleveland, and can modify the tariff in some rational manner, that this conflict may be postponed indefinitely, for I believe the great plutocratic ring would dissolve, . . . and the best hope for all of us, and for the peace and prosperity of our country, is that . . . our old democracy may be preserved, and that equality may continue among men.[26]

Generally, Adams' performance had been effective. At times he lapsed into theories that were foreign to many, but he always salvaged his talks by returning to political reality and using actual facts. He had tried to do his best to inform the masses and now he must await the fate of his country. The country, aided by Adams' efforts, was gradually becoming aware of the selfish practices of a repressive minority within the government.

Cleveland won the election, but the country was headed for a disaster far worse than anything Adams had mentioned in the campaign. It was the depression of 1893.

CHAPTER IV

HIS POLITICS 1893-1896

For the first time in the history of the country a depression had affected every segment of the society--the worker, the banker, the financier, and the foreign trade. The Democrats' immediate remedy to the depression was the repeal of the Sherman Silver Purchase Act, which had caused widespread speculation in bullion and silver stocks and which, together with the rush to purchase commodities of silver in expectation of rising prices under the McKinley Tariff Bill, brought a severe money stringency. Each class of people had their own explanation for what had happened. Conservative politicians blamed the Sherman Silver Purchase Act; labor and agrarian elements blamed capitalistic greed.

Two main causes of the depression were the decline of railroad investment and agricultural demand. In the nineties, the decline of railroad construction was so great that it was not until the turn of the century that new railroad mileage attained the levels of 1892. The decline of railroad investment had a serious effect on the American economy, because for decades it had been a major outlet for the savings of both foreign and domestic economies. The decline in agricultural demand had the most devastating effect on the economy because it began before the entire country was pulled into the depression. Later improvement came slowly. Among the major investment areas of the economy only street railways showed growth.[1]

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[1]Harold U. Faulkner, Politics, Reform and Expansion (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1959), pp. 141-146.

There was a drastic decline in the consumption of many necessities illustrating that the depression was a period of intense distress for millions. For seven years many families suffered a sharp decline in their standards of living.

America's economic relationship with Europe underwent significant changes during the period. The tapering off of foreign investments complicated the economy's difficulty in meeting its current obligations. This decline was related to the depression in Europe which reached its low point in 1895. The Europeans, however, continued investing in the United States but on a smaller scale. As these foreign capital inflows were slowing down, the Americans were increasing their investments abroad, This had the effect of aggravating the balance of payments by enlarging American demands for foreign exchange.

The important monetary factor in the depression was that the Federal government, from 1893 to 1897, had been annually incurring a deficit. In its attempt to finance the deficit, the U. S. Treasury was forced to draw on its cash. When this failed, the Treasury turned to its gold reserves. By the end of 1893 the deficit continued and the gold reserves become dangerously low. The government then resorted to borrowing. Starting with a loan in 1894, the government floated four issues. The most successful was handled by the Morgan-Belmont syndicate. The syndicate agreed to obtain from Europe one-half of the gold required by the Treasury and to guarantee the gold reserve of the Treasury. The group was successful until 1895, when a $65,000,000 outflow of gold brought on another crisis in the Treasury. This time, due largely to a war scare, the Treasury's large gold reserve was more successful than previous attempts. With this loan the gold reserve of the Treasury was

stabilized, as foreign economic recovery and more favorable export-import relationships occurred, resulting in large gold inflows during 1896 and 1897.[2]

The fears of a monetary conspiracy of the hyper-sensitive Adams' were all but verified with the Panic. To Henry, the depression of 1893 only hardened his conviction that government by capitalists, trusts, and their political agents was hopeless. Certain that nothing could be done, he let his political outlook in the 1890's become a confused and hopeless one. Brooks urged Henry to return to the United States, for the family finances seemed to be threatened by the Panic. Henry wrote:

> The American news of Friday seemed to announce the failure --impending--of the General Electric Company which will smash Boston flat, ... I have not seen yesterday's news, but I have made up my mind to finding myself in a universal mess a week from today. I only hope I have pocket-money enough to reach Quincy. If obliged to tramp, I shall be too late to sign my certificate of insolvency.[3]

Brooks' brother, John Quincy, seemed to be the hardest hit in the family:

> He had all he wanted; wealth, children, society, consideration; and he laughed at the idea of sacrificing himself in order to adorn a Cleveland cabinet or get cheers from an Irish mob. Suddenly the crisis came, a year ago, and he went all to pieces. The entire nervous system of Boston seemed to give away, and he broke down with the whole crowd of other leading men.[4]

Although Brooks and his brothers had a tendency to exaggerate their plight, they did suffer more from the Panic than did Henry, who seemed

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[2]Charles Hoffman, "The Depression of the Nineties," The Journal of Economic History, XVI, 137-164.

[3]Worthington Chauncey Ford (ed.), Letters of Henry Adams (1892-1918) (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1938), p. 30. Hereafter cited as: Ford, Letters (1892-1918).

[4]Ibid., p. 55.

to come out of the financial fracas in fine shape, as compared to the remainder of the New England community. Henry wrote:

> Everyone is in a blue fit of terror, and each individual thinks himself more ruined than his neighbor. . . . Personally I cannot see that I am affected. I owe nothing either on my own account or as trustee; . . . . My co-trustees [Brooks, Charles Francis and John Quincy] are in more trouble on account of notes falling due, but these are their private affairs, and their estates seem ample and solvent. Of course they are worried and anxious; everyone is; but nearly everyone is unable to meet such obligations, ...[5]

In reality, the family did suffer some losses, but much of their estate was salvaged. Henry commented:

> We have got through the squeeze better than most people, though at a considerable cost, not to me so much as to my brothers, and on the whole I am inclined to feel rather proud of the way in which my virtuous family has stood up to the fight; but we could not do it again. The strain has broken men down by the scores; it killed Fred Ames [Frederick Lothrop Ames (1835-1893)] ; I am told that Gordon Dexter [Franklin Gordon Dexter (1825-1903)] has gone under, ... Henry Higginson [Henry Lee Higginson (1834-1919)] has been nearly killed; Jeff Coolidge [Thomas Jefferson Coolidge (1831-1920)] has nearly had nervous prostration; the whole generation has had notice to quit.[6]

Brooks Adams, after seeing the country and every segment of its society in the clutches of the Panic and his own finances almost destroyed, thought something could be done to prevent future panics. Adams found the solution in abandoning a family tradition of sound money and adopting a policy of international bimetallism.

Bimetallists believed that it would be best to base the circulation of the national currency upon gold and silver. They maintained that such a system would avoid the evils of a restricted money supply, secure an approximate par of exchange between gold and silver countries,

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[5] Ibid., p. 31. [6] Ibid., p. 32.

and promote stability of value in the money of the commercial world.

There were two schools of bimetallists--national and international. National bimetallism was defined as the selection of both gold and silver by an individual country as legal tender at a ratio fixed without regard to the legal ratios of other countries.[7] This system existed in the United States in the 1890's where they had a limited coinage at a proportion of 16 to 1. International bimetallism was an agreement between the chief commercial nations of the world on one given ratio, thus keeping the value of silver relative to gold invariable, and causing the concurrent use of both metals in all countries.[8]

In a letter to the editor of the Boston Daily Globe, Brooks publicly explained why he had joined the camp of the international bimetallists:

> Having been brought up a gold man, I was converted to bimetallism by reading the works of the great monometallists, foremost among whom I rank Prof Soetbeer and Taussig and Mr. Giffin. . . .
>
> It was from [Giffin] that I first learned the severity of the contraction of a gold standard, for I found that the currency of the world had ceased to expand at all, while industrial growth was very rapid.
>
> . . . but of this I am certain, if the fate of silver is to be decided by the measure of prosperity which the single standard has brought to workingmen the world over during the last 20 years, then the day of bimetallism must be near at hand. I, as a bimetallist, am willing to abide by that test.[9]

In his first public appearance after adhering to a policy of international bimetallism, Adams, before a Plymouth, Massachusetts

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[7]J. Lawrence Laughlin, The History of Bimetallism in the United States (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1894), p. 4.

[8]Ibid.

[9]Brooks Adams, "Monometallism vs. Bimetallism," Boston Herald, March 9, 1894, p. 6. Hereafter cited as: Adams, "Monometallism vs. Bimetallism."

Democratic rally on October 13, 1895, warned again of an impending crisis if the country did not follow the path of international bimetallism.

> It is probable the south and west could live under the tariff had they a currency which their debts would not appreciate, or, in other words, in which the value of their products would not shrink. They know this, and that is why they clamor for silver, which keeps a relatively stable position.
>
> But silver they cannot have unless England can be brought to terms. The country is agreed the cost would be too great. Or they could live were they allowed free trade, so that they could buy as cheap as their competitors. But they cannot keep on a gold basis and pay the prices under the present tariff, and I do sincerely believe that an attempt to force them to bear this double burden will surely precipitate a catastrophe which will shake the foundations of society.[10]

Brooks now began a policy of action, trying to make the populace aware of the international bimetallism issue. In a letter to the editor of the Boston Sunday Herald he piqued the conscience of the editor, by asking:

> Would you, . . . be so obliging as to explain to your readers whether gold is, in your opinion, appreciating in value? If you think it has remained stable, and has not risen, I can understand that bimetallism is immaterial from your standpoint: but if it is appreciating, is there to be no attempt to remedy the evils of an indefinitely contracting currency?[11]

Brooks continued to nip at the heels of the monometallists through the press:

> Among the many perversions of fact caused by the exigencies of the defense of monometallism, none have been more flagrant than those relating to its effect on labor.
>
> The gold interest has resolutely maintained that the workingman thrives when values fail, because, since statistics show that the daily wage has not been materially reduced, they argue that he should do better as the cost of living lessens.
>
> Not only is this argument fallacious, but it is actually

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[10]Brooks Adams, "Not to the Point," Boston Daily Globe, October 14, 1893, p. 6.

[11]Brooks Adams, "Theory and Fact," Boston Sunday Herald, March 4, 1894, p. 12.

> dangerous, because it disguises the truth. In point of fact, while the appreciation of gold affects every class of the community, except perhaps the moneylenders, it pinches none more sharply than the earner of daily wages,. . . .[12]

Adams continued to support bimetallism not only through the press but also through agencies that would inform the populace. On February 5, 1894, he helped organize the Bimetallist Committee of Boston and New England. The committee issued the following declaration:

> The Committee is formed for the purpose of promoting the establishment of international bimetallism upon the general plank of the Latin Union [France, Belgium, Switzerland, Italy, Greece], but with a broader basis. Those concerned in the movement, while earnestly opposed to the free coinage or to any increased use of silver by this country independently of international action and agreement, believe that the repeal of the purchase clause of the Sherman Act affords a fitting and fortunate opportunity for advancing the cause of international bimetallism. They believe that the day is not far distant when the necessities of commerce will compel an international use of silver as well as of gold in currencies throughout the world.[13]

Success was immediate, for nearly all the residents of Boston signed the declaration. Their number included some of the best known businessmen of the community--bankers, manufacturers, merchants, railroad men, lawyers, and state and national officials, past and present. Also, gentlemen from nearly all parts of New England were represented.[14] No concerted effort was made by Adams to increase the membership of the committee, for he felt that outright solicitation would degrade the cause of the movement. The work of Adams' committee had shown the

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[12]Brooks Adams, "Monometallism" Boston Daily Globe, March 7, 1894.

[13]E. Benjamin Andrews, "The Bimetallist Committee of Boston and New England," Quarterly Journal of Economics, VIII (April, 1894), 319.

[14]Ibid.

country that New England was not a stronghold of monometallism. Adams was quick to point out, however, that the organization would be a predominantly Eastern organization, so as to not confuse it with the free silverites of the West.

The purpose of the committee was to assure the English bimetallists that the United States had not abandoned the cause of silver with the repeal of the Sherman Silver Purchase Act of 1890. An additional purpose was to clarify the East's stand on the silver issue. Efforts of Eastern newspapers to represent the country's cessation of silver purchases as the final doom of silver had had a most unfortunate effect upon the South and West. It had led many of those areas to think of the East as opposing the coinage of silver, national or international, at any ratio. From the painful effects of gold, coupled with the conviction that the East was resolved to perpetuate the above ideas, there was fast arising an angry sectionalism, especially with the rapid growth of the Populists.[15]

Adams, believing that all people dealing with the money question were patriotic, did not condemn the Western silverites, but wished that they would admit what was right in the committee's proposals. The power of the extreme silverites was shattered, and many who adhered to the committee's platform admitted that it was unwise to attempt national bimetallism as long as there was any hope of international bimetallism. The committee planned to present new evidence in support of international bimetallism. Adams was quite certain that the ostracism of silver began in ignorance.

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[15] Ibid., pp. 320-21.

Despite his devotion to the Democratic party, Adams began to doubt his former loyalty after witnessing Cleveland's attempts to handle the Panic of 1893. In Cleveland's first annual message, he opposed the compulsory coinage of free silver, and maintained that the government would have all of its gold displaced by silver if this coinage continued. He also maintained that the attempt to establish the bimetallic standard by international agreement had failed. He was determined to insure a gold reserve in the Treasury sufficient to continue the gold standard. On three different occasions he instructed the Secretary of the Treasury to issue gold bonds. The bonds handled by the Morgan syndicate shocked Brooks Adams, for it appeared that the government was dependent upon the power of one man on Wall Street. His fears of a monetary conspiracy only increased when it became evident that Morgan and his associates were garnering large profits from the transactions.

After suggesting what action should be taken, Adams traveled abroad to see what could be done. The closing of the Indian mints and the cessation of the large and regular monthly purchases of silver by the United States drew him to an unofficial International Bimetallic Conference in London on May 2, 1894. There were many interviews with people of distinction on the silver question. One notable dinner was given by Sir William Houldsworth, at which the Americans were encouraged to believe that England might adhere to international bimetallism. The dinner was attended by Brooks Adams, Senator Edward Wolcott, W. C. Whitney, Cleveland's former Secretary of the Navy, General Francis A. Walker, Arthur Balfour, the Right Honorable Henry Chaplin, The Right Honorable William Lidderdale, Mr. Gibbs, Mr. Grenfell, Mr. Moreton Frewen, a friend of the Adams family, Mr. Herman Schmidt, Professor

Foxwell, Mr. Heseltine, and Mr. Murray Guthrie, all more or less pronounced bimetallists.[16] There were a number of speeches, most of them encouraging. Arthur Balfour, the main speaker, maintained that the world was face to face with a great danger which could be averted only by international action to restore silver to its proper function. Mr. Chaplin's speech was the exception, for he pointed out the great difficulties blocking the way of international bimetallism, principal of which were the conservative character of the English people, and self-interest of the London bankers.[17] Senator Wolcott explained why he and Adams had come to London:

> . . . seeing that for three years to come no effective silver legislation can be secured at Washington, such legislation during President Cleveland's term being impossible, the bimetallic contest has today shifted itself from Washington to Westminister. But I am glad to endorse General Walker's assertion . . . that ninety per cent of the people of the United States are . . . convinced bimetallists. The question then for us in the United States is not one of principles, but of methods only--how best we can encourage action on the part of Great Britain.[18]

The American envoy received encouragement from Washington in a cablegram signed by fifteen senators, including Nelson W. Aldrich, William R. Allison, Calvin S. Brice, Arthur Pue Gorman, George F. Hoar, John Sherman and Daniel W. Voorhees. They stated:

> We believe that the free coinage of both gold and silver by international agreement at a fixed ratio would secure to mankind the blessing of a sufficient volume of metallic money, and, what is hardly less important, secure to the world a trade immunity from violent exchange fluctuations.[19]

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[16]Thomas Fulton Dawson, Life and Character of Edward Oliver Wolcott: Late a Senator of the United States from the State of Colorado (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1911), I, 639.

[17]Ibid., pp. 639-40. [18]Ibid., p. 640.

[19]Nevins, Cleveland, p. 608.

Despite the activities of the American group, Cleveland took only a minimal interest in the conference. Henry Cabot Lodge, who had been converted to bimetallism by Brooks Adams, planned to coerce the English into accepting a policy of international bimetallism by presenting a proposal asking for a discriminatory tariff against the British Empire if it did not consent to a bimetallic plan. Cleveland, still adhering to a sound money policy, rallied his forces and defeated the bill.

With the election of 1896 nearing, Brooks Adams looked for a candidate that would serve his cause well. To Henry he wrote:

> If the Democrats have any sense and nominate any kind of a candidate, on any kind of a platform, we can put up the prettiest fight that has been seen for many years. I may have to take a little hand before its through. . . .[20]

Thomas Reed, Speaker of the House, seemed to be the best candidate and his proposal for a tariff union brought applause from New England jingoists. After Lodge's attempt to cower England into following a policy of international bimetallism, he asserted that, since cheap silver stimulated Asiatic exports, it was necessary to consider silver and the tariff as one issue. He maintained that if England would not toe the line, "there may come a time for the nations friendly to bimetallism to unite, not in a monetary union but a tariff union--reciprocity being the reward of free coinage of silver."[21]

Henry, however, cautioned against any support of Reed because:

> As you have often said, the bankers are contemptible politicians; but their mass and unity make them the greatest single power in the country, and infallibly control the drift of

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[20]Letter, Brooks Adams to Henry Adams, May 23, 1896. As quoted from: Beringause, Brooks Adams, p. 145.

[21]Public Opinion, July 7, 1894. As quoted from: Nevins, Cleveland, p. 609.

> events. . . .
> They like the cheapest article in politics . . . and therefore will select, in my opinion, McKinley as the next President. . . . Reed is too clever, too strong willed, and too cynical, for a banker's party.[22]

But Brooks' optimism persisted despite the cautious remarks of his brother, Henry:

> I do not know why you feel so much confidence in Reed, but I suppose you have your reasons. I feel none in him or anyone else. I do not believe it matters greatly who is President. A little sooner or a little later, all must follow the drift of human society.[23]

The Reed boom, however, collapsed. Reed had been far too active in the politics of the 1890's and he had taken too strong a stand on contemporary issues. Both factors left him open to attack and alienated too many elements of the party. Reed's home state of Maine, as well as Massachusetts and Rhode Island, endorsed him and elected delegates in his favor. The defection of Vermont, which broke the solidarity of New England, the inroads made by Hanna and his money upon the Southern delegates, and McKinley's clean sweep of Illinois ruined him.[24]

Brooks should have followed Henry's advice. It was harsh, but real. Henry cynically commented: "McKinley has got possession of the field. . . . I'm for [J. P.] Morgan, McKinley and the Trusts. They will bring us to ruin quicker than we could do it ourselves."[25]

Brooks traveled to the National Democratic Convention in Chicago, but not until Lodge tried to steal some thunder from the Democrats by

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[22]Ford, Letters (1892-1918), p. 96.

[23]Ibid., pp. 99-100.

[24]Samuel W. McCall, The Life of Thomas B. Reed (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1949), p. 223.

[25]Ford, Letters (1892-1918), p. 97.

having the Republicans adopt a platform that straddled the silver issue. Lodge went to St. Louis determined to fight for the gold standard as a matter of priciple and at the same time hoped for a money plank that paid lip service to the idea of international bimetallism. His plan was successful, for there was only one silverite, Senator Henry Teller of Colorado, sitting on the sub-committee that drew up the plank.[26]

Before Brooks Adams arrived in Chicago, John Roll McLean, owner of the influential Cincinnati Enquirer had begun political maneuvers to have the convention accept a McLean-Adams ticket. McLean, like Adams, was only a part-time politician.[27] He had tried to get the Ohio convention to declare against a straight silver policy. In April, 1896, he urged Senator Calvin S. Brice to attend the national convention to help put down the silverites. Brice commented: "I don't propose to pull any more chestnuts out of the fire for Grover Cleveland. If you will get a statement from him that he will not be a candidate I will do it."[28] McLean, undaunted, conversed with Cleveland's supporter, Carlisle, saying that he had a way in which the President could smash free silver. McLean maintained that if Cleveland declared himself not a candidate, the Ohio convention could be controlled. Cleveland, when informed of McLean's proposal, only disallowed it and the convention declared for silver.

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[26]Garraty, Lodge, p. 170.

[27]John Roll McLean was an amateur that dabbled in politics and was the millionaire owner of the Cincinnati Enquirer. Actually he was a "wirepuller" who was hardly successful. In 1897 he was the unsuccessful candidate for the Senate. In 1899 he was defeated for the Ohio governorship by George K. Nash by some 50,000 votes. Henry Adams, generally thought well of him and Brooks Adams occasionally dined with him.

[28]Nevins, Cleveland, p. 697.

And so McLean, and his good friend Brooks Adams, entered the national convention with one strike against themselves. McLean met with the same amount of success in the national convention as he had had in the Ohio Convention. Adams and McLean were shelved by the Bryan supporters as old fogies and the hopes of the conservatives were all but ended.

Adams worked with the conservatives on one last hope--a Teller-McLean ticket. McLean had held this as a secondary proposal in case his first ticket was defeated. Teller now looked as though he would be the conservatives' last chance. A Washington delegate declared that Teller would make the strongest candidate in his state. Others made similar claims for the Ohio delegation where Teller had strong support among the delegates. Teller also had pledges from segments of the Populists, and all of the Southern delegation was behind him.

As far as Adams was concerned, the contest was over after Bryan's oratorical performance. Teller's supporters did not even place him in nomination, although Colorado cast its votes for him on the first two ballots. For the rest of the campaign, Brooks Adams could offer only sympathy to Teller. Teller suffered from personal attacks charging that he had a large fortune invested in silver mines, from which he stood to profit handsomely. The clergy was the most violent of all classes in their criticism. In answer to a note from Brooks Adams, Teller philosophized:

> The attacks our opponents are making on us are very irritating to those of us who know that we do not propose repudiation in any form, and would condemn a dishonest act as quickly as our detractors would. But I remember that all great movements for reform of existing abuses or for the bettering of the conditions of men, have always had just such opposition, and often

> from the people who had the greatest interest in the success of such a movement. I settle down and accept it as a part of the battle.[29]

The majority of the convention had declared for a policy of national bimetallism, and the platform read accordingly, demanding the free and unlimited coinage of both silver and gold at the legal ratio of 16 to 1, without waiting for the aid or consent of any other nation. The gold standard was denounced, and the monetary issue was declared the paramount one.

Adams was impressed, on the surface, with the efforts of the Democrats against the moneyed forces of the Republicans, which were effectively marshalled by Mark Hanna. He commented:

> A rising of miserable bankrupt, farmers, and day labourers . . . have made the greatest fight against the organized capital of the world that has ever been made in this country--or perhaps ever. No Money, no press, no leaders, no organization. Amidst abuse, ridicule, intimidation, bribery--against forces so powerful and so subtle that they reach the bravest and most honest men in the country.[30]

Brooks, as a friendly gesture to the struggling Democrats, sent money to the National Democratic Committee. It was greatly appreciated, and Brooks discovered that he was inadvertently aiding the Democrats in another way. J. K. Jones, Chairman of the National Democratic Committee, wrote:

> Your very kind favor enclosing [a] contribution to the campaign fund is received, and I hasten to tender the thanks of the entire Committee for your liberality. I assure you we highly appreciate this. I have had on my desk during the whole campaign a bundle of your valuable pamphlet, "The Gold Standard,"

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[29]September 23, 1896 (copy), Teller MSS, as quoted from: Elmer Ellis, Henry Moore Teller: Defender of the West. (Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Printers Limited, 1941), pp. 284-285.

[30]Aaron, Men of Good Hope, p. 261.

> and have distributed them in large numbers. I think it has been of incalculable service to us and will be as long as this question is a debated one.[31]

On the surface, Adams supported the Democrats. However, he secretly hoped that McKinley would win, believing otherwise that the country would be thrown into a revolution. At Hancock Hall in Quincy, Massachusetts, he avoided personalities and stuck to the issues. There was an indication that his faith in international bimetallism had begun to waiver.

> So far as we are one, the only point [of] difference is whether we shall suffer least by proceeding to coin silver ourselves, or by waiting until we can persuade England to join us. For my own part, I was a very sincere international bimetallist, until I became convinced that England had no intention of taking any action. I think no one can hope for much from that quarter since the declarations of the chancellor of the exchequer of this Tory government.[32]

Adams cleverly skirted the issue of openly supporting Bryan, yet did not alienate the Democratic party.

> Now, I want to ask if the conservative men of the United States really think the nation can stand another four years like the last four without a convulsion? If they think there is no danger, I have not a word to say. If they are content with the present situation, then vote for McKinley. That ends all arguments. But if we are in fear of the future, then we may consider whether anything can be done.
>
> I am at a loss to know how we are to trample down discontent. The discontented class are the farmers, naturally the most loyal, the most conservative and most long-suffering of all classes.[33]

Adams continued by subtly committing himself to neither the Republican nor Democratic camps:

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[31]Letter, J. K. Jones to Brooks Adams, October 21, 1896. As quoted from: Beringause, Brooks Adams, p. 150.

[32]Brooks Adams, "Will of People," Boston Herald, August 12, 1896, p. 3.

[33]Ibid.

> Discontent such as we see about us cannot be ignored. New England cannot live without the West and South. . . .
>
> We cannot carry on a republic by always treating the farming class, the 40,000,000 or so, who have always been the strength of our nation, as disloyal and dishonest scoundrels, who are to be suppressed. If they have grievances they must be listened to,. . . . Every two years the country cannot be distracted by an agrarian uprising and I am convinced that if the party in power is firmly resolved to pursue a policy of contraction of the currency, and consequently increasing depression of prices, that frequent elections will have to be dispensed with.[34]

In his last public statement before the election of 1896, Adams still carried the banner of international bimetallism. In a letter to the editor of the Boston Evening Transcript he launched into a diatribe against one Mr. Atkinson. With characteristic tactlessness he wrote:

> If Mr. Atkinson disagrees with me he is at liberty to say so when and where he pleases, but I fail to see how he can suppose that this can interest or concern me.
>
> And now, having answered . . . what appears to me to be a very foolish question, I have one word to say on my own behalf. Only yesterday Mr. Atkinson, in the [Boston] Herald, called all men who believed in silver "criminal." I forbear to express my opinion of this sort of writing. I confine myself to saying that a man who speaks thus of those who differ from him, including in this case all bimetallists, or about nine-tenths of the population, is beyond the pale of decent society. Therefore, I announce, once and for all, that in the future I shall disregard all communications of Mr. Atkinson on this or any kindred topic.[35]

The chance to briefly support Bryan gave Brooks the opportunity to strike at a life-long enemy of the family--State Street. Once the fun was over, Brooks wrote to Henry:

> Personally I want McKinley, as, with Bryan, we should have a racket which would lay us all out. I really can't imagine what he and the people behind him would not do, supposing they got in power.[36]

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[34] Ibid.

[35] Brooks Adams, "Mr. Brooks Adams to Mr. Atkinson," Boston Evening Transcript, August 25, 1896, p. 6.

[36] Letter, Brooks Adams to Henry Adams, September 6, 1896. As quoted from: Anderson, Brooks Adams, p. 59.

Hanna and the moneyed interests guaranteed the election of McKinley, but other factors figured in the election. The gold interests, the farmers, and other occupational groups benefited from the upswing of the business cycle following the depression. Increasing industrial production in the United States, and European crop failures in 1897 expanded the farmers' market abroad and at home. At the same time, the opening of the Rand gold fields, the Klondike discovery, and the introduction of the cyanide process combined to disprove the silver argument that there could never be an adequate gold supply. But Adams went one step further, and on an idealogical basis explained the futility of silver. Writing to Henry he said:

> This election has , however, caused a great light to break in on me. I see that silver is impossible, and I see it because I see my own theories put into practical operation. I have always said that nature eliminated the unfit simply because they could not fill the demands of the environment. Never in my life have I understood the crusades until I saw this campaign of the Democrats. Silver itself is not only theoretically practicable, but a silver policy carried out by competent men need not cause a depreciation of our currency, or any particular shock to credit. . . . Now there were, among the silver party, a small number of the shrewdest men in the country. . . . Could they have controlled events matters might have been very different. As nature works these men were thrust aside and the movement fell into the hands of men exactly corresponding to Louis the Pious, or Cardinal Pelagius. Bryan I conceive to be one of the very most empty, foolish and vain youths, ever put in a great crisis by an unkind nature.[37]

The controversy surrounding the silver issue was far out of proportion to its importance. Charles Francis Adams, Jr., succinctly described why this had occurred. He maintained that the silver states had been introduced into the Union for a political purpose and that these "rotten burroughs" had no business there. Although they had some 12

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[37] Ibid.

votes in the Senate, holding on the silver and other questions a secure balance of power, they did not represent the population of one state of reasonable size.[38]

Silver was a dying issue. Brooks' optimistic, silverite friend, Senator Wolcott, returned to Europe in 1897 and found that interest in international bimetallism was decreasing. Germany had accepted monometallism and England was opposed to international bimetallism. As in America, bimetallic enthusiasm had never enveloped the legislative bodies of the European continent.[39]

The Nation observed the national situation with deep satisfaction: "For the first time in twenty years the silver menace is cleared away from the financial horizon. . . . The silver lining no longer adorns the Western sky."[40] In the East, among the moneyed circles, many Democrats actually declined to disclose their opinions on the currency question, refusing to open old wounds.

Brooks Adams readily abandoned international bimetallism once it became evident that bimetallism was not the panacea for the faltering American society. Unlike his brothers, he was still optimistic that something could be done to save the democratic experiment. It would be many years before he would lament: "It is seldom that a single family can stay adjusted through three generations. That is a demonstrable

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[38]Charles Francis Adams, Jr., "Mr. Cleveland's Tasks and Opportunities," Forum, XV (May, 1893), 308.

[39]James H. Eckels, "Wolcott Commission and Its Results," Forum, XXIV (December, 1897), 396-401.

[40]"The Week," Nation, LXVII (November 17, 1898), 361.

fact. It is now full four generations since John Adams wrote the constitution of Massachusetts. It is time that we [he and his brother, Henry] perished. The world is tired of us."[41]

[41]Brooks Adams, "The Heritage of Henry Adams," in Henry Adams, The Degradation of the Democratic Dogma (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1919), p. 93.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Brooks Adams' career was that of a major critic of American institutions, and the background and tradition which he carried into the post-bellum period established the basis for his criticism of the American society. His active political involvements did not alter these traditional values, but they did create a fuller understanding of the post-Civil War society. Brooks was the last to exemplify the hard-bound ideals of the near legendary eighteenth century Adams family. The tradition was easily perceived, for as only an adolescent at the end of the Civil War, he was sheltered from the harsh changes and moral corrosion of the post-bellum period. Brooks lived within the closed, narrow society of Boston and Harvard College.

From there, he and his friends looked with apprehension at the rapid industrialization of the country and at the conflicts between the capitalists and those he would later style as the "common man." Actually, the "common man" for Adams corresponded in attitude to his own Boston experience. Adams was disappointed with the increasing materialism and the growth of political corruption in American society, and the loss of honorable standards among leaders. Some of his class retreated from the unfriendly confusion by traveling to Europe or withdrawing from the contemporary society.

Adams, instead, pursued the battle against nineteenth century materialism in the literary forum and in an active political career. His dedicated interests that emerged during his public life were a dimly disguised

modern formulation of the traditional faith in the democratic experiment. The major parts of the American democratic experiment, in the eyes of an Adams, consisted of an educated leadership, a balance of governmental machinery, a government by laws and not of men, and the cautious appeal of past experience. In other words, the democratic experiment would only succeed if there was a strong executive as the agent of balance in a well ordered and judiciously limited government. The secondary aspects of his tradition included an educated leadership and an intense individualism. But for the changed circumstance and a shifting vocabulary it might have been grandfather Adams' writing.

In spite of Brooks' political concern, he always entered the political scene reluctantly. Hesitant, sometimes reluctant, participation reflected an awareness that all was not well with the American society. This hesitant participation was a primary factor in explaining Adams' political activity, for such participation seemed to deaden the shock effect of the post-bellum change for him.

But whatever stimulated him to activity, Adams' attitudes toward the national government were very clear. Like his forefathers, he had solid faith in the Constitution and government. The development and settlement of the country that his father had foreseen had occurred by the time young Brooks had reached maturity, but now the direction taken by the Gilded Age was the antithesis of what his family heritage had taught him.

Development and change had occurred so swiftly that Adams feared the American society might collapse unless the people were made aware of the nature of change, and unless old principles were maintained. His family heritage taught him that the leaders of the country must be well

educated and that the country's development must be orderly. For example, the settlement and development of Western lands must follow the ordered principles of conservation.

Adams, nevertheless, remained flexible in his views and responsive to the particular character of his age. He tempered, therefore, some of his attitudes acquired from his heritage. He supported competent, if not well-educated leaders, like Grover Cleveland, and he modified his views of the Constitution. Adams originally thought the Constitution to be a strict and holy document, but he absorbed the spirit of change inherent in the doctrine of evolution. He became convinced that the Constitution was flexible and that it was actually the result of past customs and experiences. He also tempered his attitudes toward the "common man," in response to current political considerations. He now identified the interests of the "common man"--thus the majority--with the interests of the Adamses, for the unethical giants of industry and their allies, the political corruptors, had upset the balance of government. In this light the rule of the majority in place of the current oligarchy corresponded to the enlightened, disinterested and balanced government of the eighteenth century.

In the 1870's and 1890's the repressive minority was the Senatorial ring. Dominated by the moneyed interests, this Senatorial ring became most repressive in the 1890's. By this time some progress had been made in eliminating the less desirable elements of industrialism and big business. Many were inclined to regard the problem as solely a moral one to be cured with education. Many of the most sincere and outspoken advocates of change had not really comprehended the problems of the new age. A brief perusal of Adams' political activity in the nine-

teenth century would indicate that he understood the problems of his time, although his political effectiveness was minimized by his inconsistencies and irregularities in party politics.

Adams' career followed the principle of a typical Boston Brahmin who in face of existing conditions found himself a reformer, demanding popular ethical government. To him the success of popular government depended on the virtue, intelligence, and success of the people governed. He was always hopeful. Brooks Adams did not believe in an age of simplicity. He realized that change was inevitable and that the change must serve to elevate, and make the populace more satisfied, if a major social revolution were to be avoided. He was not so estranged from his society that he would naively try to reconstruct it anew. Adams represented the son of a New England tradition--wealthy, cultivated, educated not only by books, but by venerable traditions. The old want of order had its appeal. He longed for a certainty from which to anchor his life.

In his search for order in cautious change he followed many courses. During his search, Adams would best be described by the comment of his older brother, Henry, that: "As a Jeffersonian Jacksonian Bryonian democrat, Brooks like the cow on the railroad, is not hurt much but some discouraged by the shock of the engine."[1]

Adams' political career may strike one as being muddled but he was basically a cautious conservative. He did not really want any change in the American society but, realizing that the changes could not be stopped, he wanted to be sure that all change was cautious and sound for a better American society.

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[1]Ford, Letters (1892-1918), p. 284.

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This microfilm can be found in the Montana State University Library under the file number 24.

Part IV of the Microfilm of the Adams Papers contains:

letters received and other loose papers, in a single chronological sequence, 1639-1889;

undated material;

a supplement of material arranged topically (Ciphers, Cipher Keys, Genealogical Material, Newspaper Clippings, and Wills, Deeds, etc.);

and addenda consisting of portions of the diaries of John Adams, 1761, and of Charles Francis Adams, 1820, 1824-1827, discovered too late for inclusion in Part I.

Each reel of microfilm carries the inscription: The Adams Papers, Letters Received and Other Loose Papers followed by a date.

The reels of microfilm that were helpful in this study are:

549 (May-July 1860),
568 (December 1863-February 1864) to 600 (1888-1889),
603 (Topical Supplement),(Genealogical Material),
606 (Topical Supplement),(Newspaper clippings: 1850-1888).

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